

The Beat Within

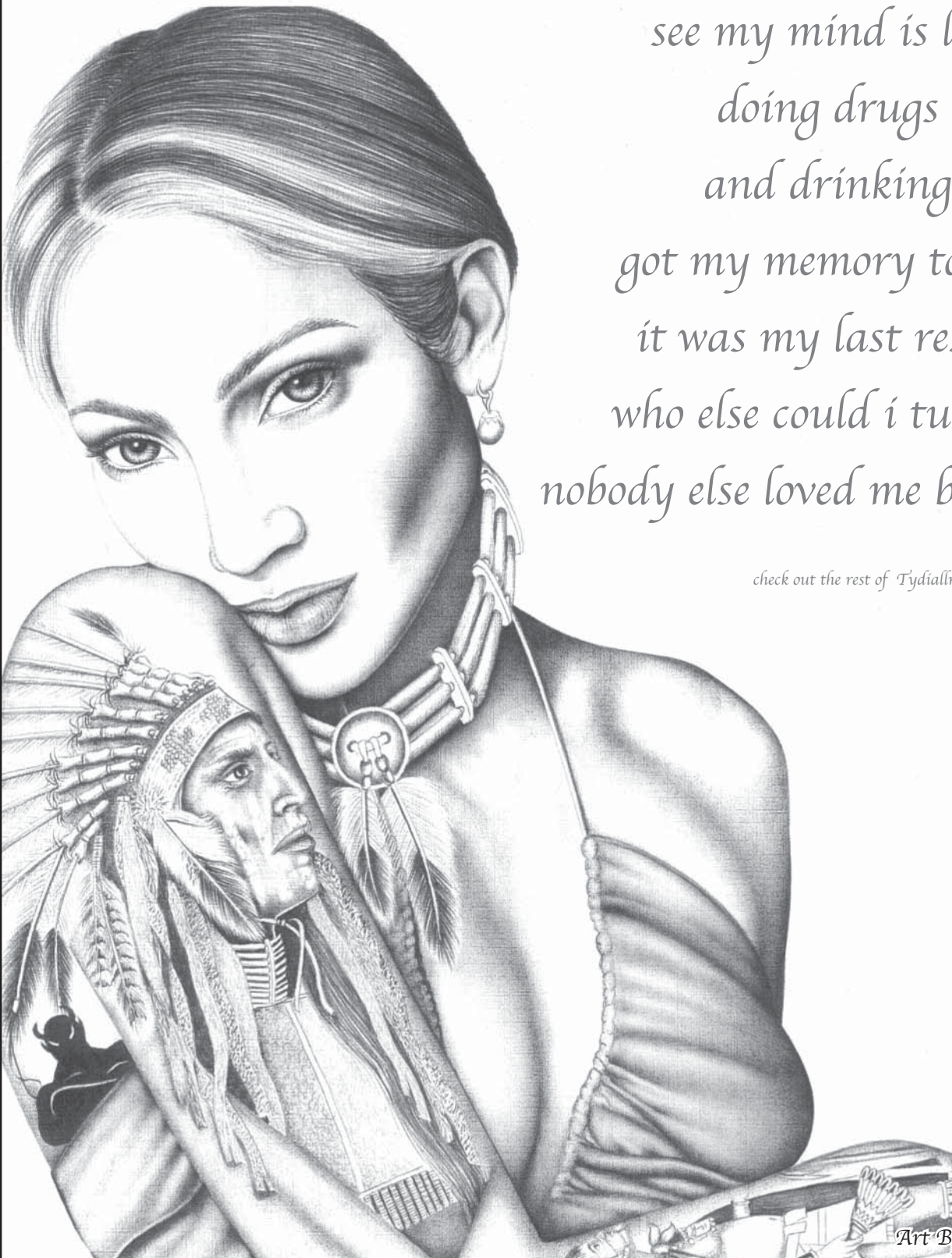
A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside



Volume 9.26

i don't even remember
see my mind is lost
doing drugs
and drinking
got my memory tossed
it was my last resort
who else could i turn to
nobody else loved me but drugs

check out the rest of Tydiallmighty's POW on page 7



Art By Chino, PBSP SHU

To be a champion. Have any of you readers ever experienced the feeling of being seen as a champion, or being a part of a championship team? It's an incredible feeling to reach the top and be called the champions. The champ! Most of us know that in order to be a champion, you have to put in an incredible amount of work, meaning long, long hours of training, studying and preparing yourself for the competition that awaits you, also knowing that the competition/fellow you are up against also is striving for the same crowning glory — being known as a champion!

Tell us of a time you experienced being a champion, or came damn close to smelling the roses, only to lose because of a mental breakdown, a flaw of sorts, a two-out rally, a Hail Mary pass, a buzzer beater, penalty kicks, or a slightly stronger opponent. Being a champion should not only be thought about in terms of sports, there are so many things we all compete for, or have had the opportunity to compete for, outside of sports . . .

In order to become a champion, you have to meet expectations, and that is one of the hardest things to do, especially in sports. Seeing an athlete(s) lift his or her game to almost impossible heights is amazing, and how often we hear of those who seem to have a shoe-in to winning the championship fall short of their goals/dreams. Being a champion means fighting to the end, with losing being totally out of the question.

With this said, we truly are in awe of one of the greatest athletes in the world, Lance Armstrong, who is but a few stages away of earning his sixth Tour de France title. When this year's Tour de France began, Lance Armstrong was expected by everyone in the world to win his sixth consecutive title (who had ever heard of such a feat in this cycling event?). What Lance Armstrong has done thus far, with five straight titles, especially after coming back from the edge of death, with his bout with cancer, and then becoming the most dominate figure in cycling/sports, is a mind-blowing achievement. Cycling, if you don't know, is probably the most physical and mentally grueling of all sports, too, and you're not reading these words from a cyclist enthusiast. You're reading this from an editor who is totally in awe of this amazing tale.

And here he is, a few stages shy of possibly earning an unheard of sixth consecutive title. This twenty-stage race in France equals 2500 miles of bike riding/racing, with hundreds of those miles riding up steep, steep hills where the hot, humid summer air is thin and the competition is thick. Have you seen the highlights on TV?

The crazy thing is despite Lance beating cancer, he is expected to come out on top every year. Can you imagine those envious riders, or should we say resentful riders, who try to match his efforts? Nevertheless, Lance pedals onward, no matter what his peers and the world thinks, and we're sure even beyond his own expectations. Some of us are very lucky to be witnessing what many say is the hardest thing to do in sports, cycling in the Tour de France. Ride on Lance Armstrong! Ride on! A true champion in his field and off the cycle path, too.

Of course there are plenty of stories of great champions, especially in sports, from MJ to Tiger, to the various championship dynasties, from the great New York Yankee baseball teams to the San Francisco 49er football teams of the Montana and Young era. Then there are historical figures in organizing/in politics who are champions in helping empower their communities, from Cesar Chavez to MLK Jr., from Gandhi to Malcolm X and these current politicians fighting for their respected political slot, be it president of the USA, or a local board of supervisor's post. Then there are lawyers who are champions of the poor and the disenfranchised like the ACLU. What about students who organize in local high schools who fight the school board for better conditions? Aren't these folks champions? Yes, indeed!

To be a champion, what does it mean to you? We're always in awe of those champions, too. The work, the discipline, the hunger to perfect one's game with limited flaws so they can make small and big sacrifices that will hopefully help someone, or a whole community, come out on top.

You know, not to sound corny, but each week we read numerous pieces from many of you who write with the willingness to do whatever it takes to get out of the criminal justice system, meaning leaving the 'hood, the game, the gang, the drugs and alcohol, leaving what many would call hell, for a safer place. Yes indeed, actions speak louder than words, but words, that is where it all begins . . . With the hope that when the end comes, you will find the "high" road where there is peace, love and understanding.

Unfortunately, the odds are great that you will fail, slip, so your determination to pick yourself up and push and push and until you overcome the drawbacks, the peer pressure, and the system, must be strong so you can succeed and find a way out. It is difficult but doable. You have to perfect your game. Many do it, just not enough of you. Or, it's too little too late for that kind of action, the writing continues to express the drive to succeed. Simply put, too many of our strongest teachers in The Beat have run out of chances, and now sit behind bars with life sentences. Even though they have life sentences, these writers are still champions to us readers of The Beat, 'cause what better teacher/champion for those youngsters/elders who need to realize that there is a better way than those who experience the pain and loneliness of incarceration? Read The BWO on page 52.

Okay Beat readers, we are days away from the deadline (07/31/04) for our tenth editor's note writing contest. At this point, we, surprisingly, do not have many submissions, so our hint to

you is that the odds are in people's favor (your favor?) to come out a winner, a champion! So write a piece and submit it to the contest, today. Ohh, if you forgot, the topic for our writing contest is, what is your all-time favorite movie and why? Do you like love stories, horror, crime and punishment, or musicals? What was it about that movie you loved so much? Was it actually the movie or the story that led up to it, or revolved around the movie? Top prize for this contest is a \$100 money order, followed by a \$50 money order for second, while third and fourth places will earn the writers \$25 each. Deadline: July 31. We hope you have some fun with this one.

Moving right along, the three topics we discussed in our workshops leading up to this package of writing were "Surprise! — Has there ever been a time when you did something that you did not think you were capable of doing? Something that you always told other people you were never going to do? For example, stand up to someone you didn't think you could? Do well on a test, without cheating, you thought you were going to bomb? Had pity for someone? What did this teach you about yourself? Or has someone ever done something in front of you that you didn't think they were capable of doing? What did you learn from that incident?"

So tell us a story about a time you achieved more than you thought you could."

Our second topic was the heavily popular, "I Don't Care — Have you ever heard someone say, 'I don't care'? We've heard plenty of Beat folks over the years say 'I don't care' about things that you know damn well they should care about. What makes someone not care? Why do people give up?"

From your experience, is it a cop-out or is it pure frustration to not care? What don't you care about and why? Could you see yourself carrying about something in the future? What do you care about today that once upon a time you didn't care about?

This week we want to know your take on caring, not caring and what it takes to care."

And our last topic was, "The night of my life was . . ." And we must mention that it saddens us to see that for many young Beat writers, the night of their lives consists of having unsafe sex, and doing too many drugs and drinking too much alcohol. It's sad because they end up getting locked up on the night they were supposed to be having such a great time. We wonder, how are you supposed to be having the night of your life and then you wind up getting locked up? Sounds like a nightmare to us. So, are you lying to yourself when you say that was the night of your life? Lastly, before we move away from this topic, you know that ol' saying, "the biggest pleasures often cause the harshest pain"? Well, as we compiled the writings for "The night of my life was" what we noticed was that this saying obviously became a reality for you.

Before we call it a rap, let's give our respects to our host of POW (Piece of the Week) recipients! Bringing it on thick from the 150 crew, we have Rubin with the tragic rhyme, "Ghetto Tragedy." Then there's our old friend, Imay, who writes a great letter, entitled, "Dear Beat Within Readers." We even have an impressive double shot from Shadow, he delivers, "A World Of Difference For Me" and "Discrimination Sux." Can't bypass Tyrone The Tydialmighty who is back to claim a spot on the precious POW pages with "Tydialmighty: What's In A Name?" Props to Carl for his powerful poem, "Street Circles." And before we leave the East Bay grease of the 150 Crew, let's not forget Shady Boy with "My Life." As we pay the \$3 bridge toll to venture to SF/YGC, we see that there's one knockout of a piece worthy of POW and that one is by our friend, Young Skits, who writes a powerful poem taking us through the paths of his life, entitled, "Who Cares?" Oh no, there is one more POW winner, this time we have to get down to SFO Airport, jump on a Southwest Airplane, and get ourselves into Arizona, 'cause that's where Hakim is stepping up big with his autobiographical sketch, titled, "Childhood." Thank you POW winners, and thank you to all of you writers for taking the time to write so seriously.

Some of you are probably wondering what happened to San Mateo Juvy, aka Hillcrest! Well, due to an outbreak of the chicken pox, the young people were quarantined. And finally, last week, we were warmly allowed back in to the Hall. So look out for Hillcrest in issue 9.27!

Let's bring it full circle, back to being a champion. Only few can grab that title. Many push for it for years and years and still come up empty-handed because even though they find success, it's not at the level of being a champion, but they might proclaim themselves as champions anyway. For example, you can say Sir Charles Barkley never won an NBA basketball title, but how can you say the man is not a champion given all he has accomplished?! This also goes for MLK, Jr. He had a dream, is it even close to being fulfilled? Nope, yet he is one of the greatest leaders of our time.

And in our eyes, anyone who leads a successful life, striving for the best, is a champion, and this is what we want from you, to believe in yourself and not settle for anything less, 'cause less for you readers of The Beat might be a life in the criminal justice system. And again, we must add, if you fail and find yourself knee-deep in the system with limited if any chances of ever getting out, well, the sign of a true champion is to not give up/ give in, but to continue to fight for what is right, and in the meantime, educating others with the hope they will not follow in your footsteps.

This one goes out to Lance Armstrong and to those of you who, against all odds and expectations, refuse to lose. We're pulling for you. Ride on and write on!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

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Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – Annie E. Casey Foundation, California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, Free Speech TV, Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Louis R. Lurie Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Morris Stulsaf Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund For Children & Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Richard Rhoda Goldman Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, Shinnyoen Foundation, Stone Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Renbe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Ghetto Tragedy

a kid in a casket
a flower-made basket
but mac-eleven hit that boy
in his drastic
the one eleven's
an' one eighty-seven's
it really doesn't matter now
that boy's gone on his way to heaven
tell his family it's gonna be all right
but his momma toss an' turn
an' she can't sleep at night
why is that
'cause he got anotha brotha
out there in the light
but his sister's at home
and her life ain't right
so momma's stressin'
put her in a convalescent home
sooner or later momma's gonna be
in a funeral home
and his younger brother gonna
end in a group home
tryin' a stay strong
even though he gon'
be a grown man all on his own
hopefully he don't
lead his children wrong
and they raise up in a happy home

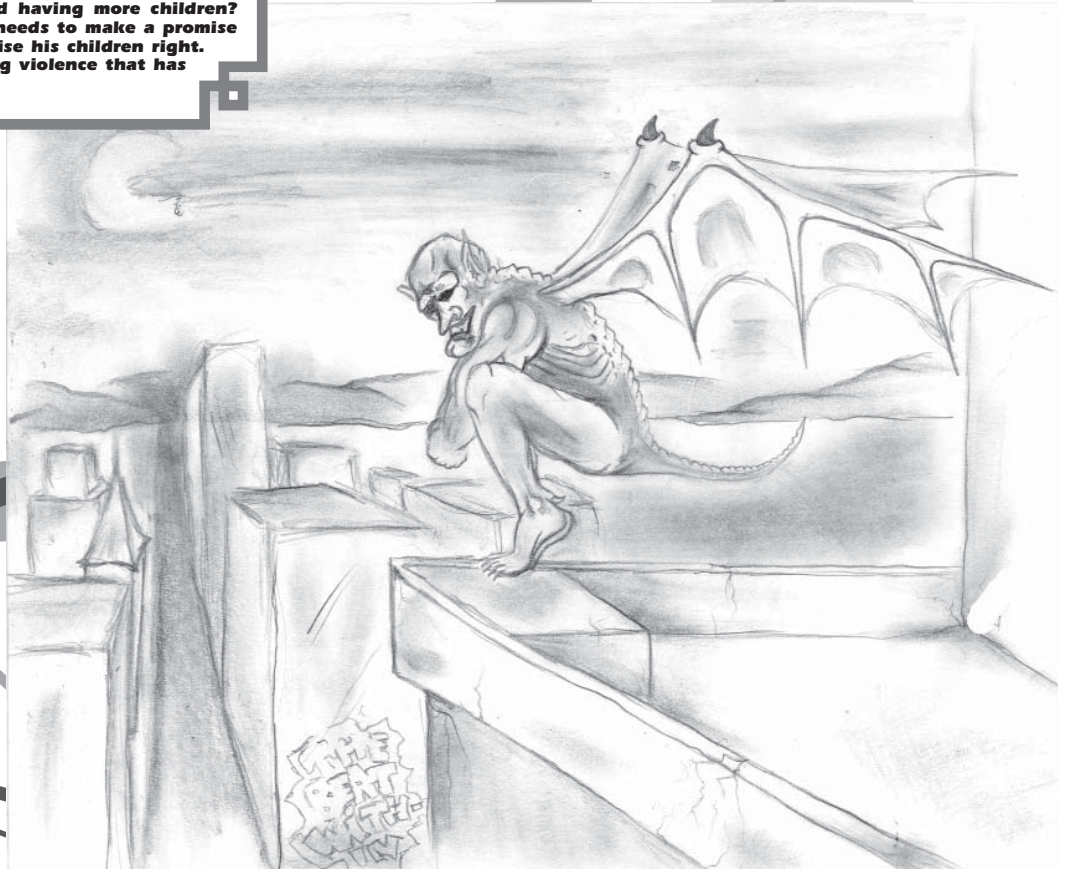
-Rubin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Where did that family start to go wrong? No father in the home? 'Cause he's dead; or in prison; or just disappeared on his last mission; or moved cross town and having more children? Each young man that survives the street, needs to make a promise he'll keep — to get out that life and raise his children right. Thanks for rhyming without glorifying violence that has young men dying.

A World Of Difference For Me

Well now I am 18 years old
And I kinda feel old
But it's okay 'cause I got a plan
And I feel a positive plan makes a man
I'm going to escape this terrible place
A lot of this bull shhh feels like a punch in the face
But now I'm looking for a pretty place
Where the flowers grow
And I wanna go where the water flows.
Where I can be me and not get discriminated
'Cause all my life — I've been hated
People picked on me for being who I am
Making me wanna die and leave my fam
But I don't let that stuff bother me
From now as far as I can see
I'm going to be someone that makes a difference
While all these crapheads got me on their conscience
'Cause when I was in school people use to say
I was going to be a famous sniper someday.
When you see me on the streets
You'll remember me, I'm the one in juvi writin' to The Beat!
-Shadow, 150 Crew
From The Beat: We know you can make a difference in the world — you already are by writing your poetry 'cause a lot of people are feelin' you. All you have to worry about is yourself 'cause you don't owe anybody anything. In the end, the only person you have to answer to is yourself. They say you'll be a sniper but only because they are vipers.

a grown
man all on
his own
hopefully
he don't
lead his
children
wrong



Childhood

When I was thirteen years old, I was neglected by my mom. I had nowhere to go, so I went to the park. All I had was a duffel bag of clothes, the shoes I was wearing, and a five-inch pocketknife. When I was hungry, I walked to Food City a mile up the road and shoplifted. I'd walk back to the park and eat on a bench. It was the middle of winter, and at night it was fifty degrees or colder. Sometimes it was hard to sleep.

I still attempted to go to school while I was out on the streets. I would beg my friends for money, five dollars here, a dollar there. Weekends when there was nothing for me to do, I would ride the city bus just for fun, just to see where I would end up. By the end of the day I'd end up at a mall.

I slept on the bus stop, shaking because the weather was too harsh. Sometimes I would cry myself to sleep. It was December now and I lived on the streets a whole month. 5 AM the city bus routes would start, and I would get on the bus just to keep warm. Sometimes I would sleep on the bus. I felt safer there.

One day I woke up around 9 AM, and some adult with short blonde hair, blue eyes, and a piercing in his chin was there at the back of the bus with me. We started chatting, and I found out his name was Juan Pedro. He was a high school dropout. He lived in a hotel, at the Red Roof Inn. He gave me a job there.

At the hotel, I would clean pool, or clean rooms when the guest left. I didn't like it, but it was money. He didn't pay me much because I was only 13. I slept in the abandoned hotel rooms that people checked out of. I kept that job for two months. I was proud of myself for keeping that job and going to school. Eventually I stopped going to school, because I couldn't keep up with my new job and school.

Later on I quit that job and hung out at the library. A lady named Nancy called CPS for a group home. I stayed there for a few years. When I was seventeen and two months I AWOLed and went back on the streets. I needed money, so I went back to Juan, only he was doing something totally different. He was writing bad checks. That's what I'm in Durango for. I waited for court and the judge slammed down the mallet and said, "detained." I have been here for 68 days.

Thinking my future was crushed, I lost all hope and was about to give up when a mentor named Aaron showed up. He told speeches that would motivate me to want something better than what I had become. Soon I started to a few read books every week. Now I've decided to go back to school, even though I'll be twenty-one when I get my diploma. I'll get a job, and go to Gateway Community College and study to be a pyrotechnic. My quote was to never give up despite my rough childhood.

-Hakim, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Hakim, excellent writing! This is a sad yet hopeful autobiography. You are a determined young man who has proven that giving up has not been an option for you. Now you have decided that you will enter into adulthood as a **STRONG PERSON**. You made the right choice and took in positive words from a good motivator. Just remember where you came from and one day you may be the one person to make a positive impact on someone who may be living the life that you have once led. Good luck.

When I was thirteen years old, I was neglected by my mom. I had nowhere to go, so I went to the park. All I had was a duffel bag of clothes, the shoes I was wearing, and a five-inch pocketknife.

Dear Beat Within Readers

This is Imay, checking in, hopefully for the last time at the Alaco. Motel (150). I'm a seventeen-year-old black female who's been in and out of these four walls since I was fourteen.

I'd like to thank The Beat for giving me somewhere else to channel the hurt and anger I had, and have inside of me.

Well, as some of y'all know already, I'm expecting a baby in February. What I would like to say to all those young women who want a baby, wanting to be loved, it is okay. But, realize where you want it from. Babies will love you because they need you. They react to your every being.

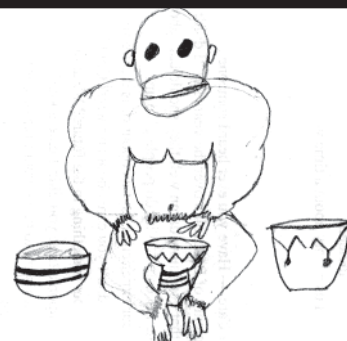
To those hard-headed girls like myself who have to bump their own heads to understand, when you reach that threshold and choose to cross over, it's no longer about you. So the love that you wanted, you end up having to give.

A few more words to y'all lil' mamas out there; most of us are here because our parents were young and lost, so if you're smart enough to make that choice, be smart enough to break the chain. I myself look forward to having my child, and one day, meeting a man who has looked at pain up close, and overcome and chose to make a difference.

Until this world takes me out, I love y'all.

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Teach on Imay! Young women like you, that need to bump their head against the wall become some of the smartest, strongest people, you do prove that. You've been thought so much since fourteen years old, in and out of the Hall. Just wait, you still have so much to learn. Once you become a mother, you are going to have to apply all your knowledge to make the right decisions, and still will need to bang your head against the wall a few times. You have plenty of work to do, but you'll make a great mother, and that's what's most important, being there for your child. Live and learn. We wish you the best Imay.



My Life

Looking at my life I can't complain.
I had it all but then come the pain.

Into my heart it shot.

Its job being to sit there and make me rot.

Over ten years ago my father left

I don't know how many nights I sat and wept

Just like that — he was gone.

What possibly could have gone wrong?

He had one boy

I would have rather had him than all of my toys

I owed him so much when he left I felt nothing

Nothing but crushed.

How could a man do such a thing?

Didn't he give a damn?

He did, and trust me, he really misses his boy

Drugs can make people do stupid things like leaving a
family behind

To me that should be a crime

But on the other hand, my mom is a gold medalist for
doing What she had to do

She took care of what he left behind

How can one be so kind?

She never gave up

Even after she was hit by a bus

Today I know my dad is in jail.

I know I can't be mad at him because the drugs took over

But then he found a lucky four-leafed clover.

I wish he could be here, but I know he can't

Now looking back I can see my life wasn't so bad.

I had too much support for that, I'm glad

The biggest support was my grandpa;

he was always there for me

Last year my grandma passed away on June 25, 2003

She may be in heaven, but in our memories she lives

And in our hearts is where she is.

-Shady Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Indeed, it sounds like you've had a strong support system. But a father figure is necessary for a young man and you missed him. What drove you to end up incarcerated? How could this aspect of your life have been avoided? How can you make sure that you show your remaining family love? And also be sure that you don't end up like your father in all of the above?



Street Circles

We need to start thinkin'

And let it sink in

That only we have the power to stop the parents
weepin'

'Cause over the weekend

Their child was leakin'

Another victim of a local street sweepin'

Now he's six feet deep and

His brother wants revenge

He's on the street with a gat and he's seekin'

You see the chain man?

I know it's pain man

But you gotta understand

That there's another way man

Don't reach for the gun

Just reach for the love

'Cause he's dead and there ain't shhh you can do

If you seek revenge, what's that gonna prove?

Maybe that you're hard too

But then his brother will look for you

It's the circle of life

If you're takin' four rights

You need to take a left

'Cause you're leadin' to death

It's time to make your own route

And get others to follow

Make sure your voice is loud

And your heart is not hollow

Keep your mind active

And your intelligence passive

Just stay off the streets

And stay on your feet

Think.

-Carl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are feelin' your powerful poem to the fullest. You got mad game to offer here. Maybe your words will sink into someone's head and their parents will no longer suffer. Do you practice what you preach? We hope that you do 'cause that would be the best way to teach. When you are released, what will you do with your life?

**Don't reach for the gun
Just reach for the love
'Cause he's dead and there
ain't shhh you can do
If you seek revenge, what's
that gonna prove?
Maybe that you're hard too
But then his brother will
look for you**

Tydiallmighty: What's In a Name?

i'm tydiallmighty and
i learned the game young
from pimpin' and panderin'
to bustin' a gun
after all of these years
i've missed all of the fun
but in the time in between
that i feel has been wasted
i've learned that these streets
can be extremely two-faced'd
they all wanna see you as deep
in misery as them
the people in the streets
on hatred they depend
but not me
i've always had a living soul
but that's only half
so let me explain as a whole
my anger my pain my hurt
my unhappiness
this life was not chosen
so i choose to just laugh at it
cover the feelings
that wrestle deep down inside
i'd be selfish if i did it
contemplating suicide
it's sick sometimes
the thoughts running marathons
around my brain

but at least i'm surviving
so who am i to complain
the rain blurs my vision
so it's hard to maintain
let's go on a ride
down memory lane
when everything was easy
first and second grade
no worrying about eating
and how to get paid
those things were a given
my carpet was laid
never did i think once
that those times would soon fade
but they did
and they're gone
so it's time to move on
oh yeah did i tell y'all
how it all went wrong
i don't even remember
see my mind is lost
doing drugs and drinking
got my memory tossed
it was my last resort
who else could i turn to
nobody else loved me but drugs
they stood firm dude
they kept me goin'
they gave me courage
but that courage was false
and made me nervous
i'm smarter without them
and don't care about them

but they had my back
so how could i doubt them
because my mind is no longer
clouded
and will never be again
'cause from here on out
i got a pencil or a pen
my extraordinary journey
is far from over
but i bet you one thing
i'll be enjoying it sober
and for the rest of my problems
i'll solve them later
i hope when you read it
y'all will understand this paper

**-Tyrone The Tydiallmighty,
150 Crew**

From The Beat: When we're sick and tired of being sick and wired, looking down the barrel of time expired — we're ready to listen. But one thing you've never been is a liar, except those fables you'd tell yourself on how you were just missing out on ghetto fabulous wealth. So you did what you did and you've been where you've been, and now you know — you needn't go there again. You'll survive this depression that has you stressing, 'cause that's just about the hardest part of learning a lesson. But lesson learned and corner turned, from this bottom you'll rise to the top; if you can just stay stopped! Drugs were there for you, but they never did care for you; and if you can go square for you, you already got what you need to succeed: a brain that's fired by desire but not greed. With a clear head, you will accomplish the deed, and your adventures in sobriety will finally lead you to success in a wider society. So share your experience, strength and hope, 'cause now you know why they call it — dope!

Disarimination Six

Some people don't like me
'Cause I'm Goth and people say I look girly
But I'm not what you think I am.
I am human too
But a lot of you people say I belong in a zoo
I like to use that stuff you say for my benefit
And a lot of it is bull shhhh!
But it's okay I'm not trippin'
'Cause you'll change your mind when I start flippin'
'Cause of your ass they got me on meds
To calm down so I don't make myself dead
I like to hear a lot of the shhhh you be sayin'
But I take it to heart when you're not playin'
I like the way I am and the way I act
But just so you know I'm gonna make it and that's a fact
I like to do a lot of drugs
But you know I'd be different if I could get some hugs.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You really shouldn't trip off what other people have to say about you. You are wonderful just the way you are and we at The Beat know that for a fact. Most people try to hurt your feelings because they are having problems in their life or because they are intimidated by you because you are different and don't know how else to act around you. Don't let it get under your skin and stay comfortable with yourself. Keep your head up; don't let the haters get you down.

Who Cares?

I've heard someone say
I don't care to be free
Then he got locked up
And put in YGC
Livin' in the streets
Probably made him this way
Wondering if he'll live
To see the next day
So he turns to anger
To try to hide the pain
Wonders how a total stranger
Can make him go insane
I heard him say
That I don't care about life
Get a chick toss her quick
I don't wanna have a wife
I look at the life
I lived of despair
And it was me that pretended
Like I really didn't care.

-Young Skits B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wow, Young Skits. You led us through the paths your life has taken, setting us up to give you some sound advice about life — then hit us with that dynamite punch line! So, the question we're left with is why did you have to pretend you didn't care? And now that you've admitted that, what will you do to show that you really do care? All we can say is we're mighty grateful that you do care, and we're very curious to know where your new understanding will take you.

My Religion

My religion motivates me in a lot of ways. My religion has made me realize life isn't all about fun and games. In this lifetime, you have to prove yourself worthy of entering paradise.

Every time I pray I get even more motivated and realize my life was spinning out of control on the outs. My religion makes me feel proud of being a Muslim. Whenever I'm confused and worried about my life, I know at the end whatever happens in my life, it's a gift from Allah. My religion has five pillars of becoming a Muslim.

Shaheda, meaning believing in Allah and no other God and also Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the last messenger. The second is doing your five prayers each day. The third is in the month of Ramadan fasting from sunrise to sunset for 30 days. The fourth is giving charity from your income you receive, if you can. Finally the fifth pillar of Islam is completing a pilgrimage to Hajj, which is in Saudi Arabia, at least once in your lifetime.

When a Muslim prays, he's asking Allah for forgiveness and also for guidance. My incarceration has gotten me a lot more close to my religion and has changed my thinking a lot, and I thank Allah for that every day.

I wrote this piece for anybody who's confused in life and wants to change before it's too late. Peace to all my boys in the Hall, on the outs, and Nick who's in Rita. May Allah guide all of your souls to the right path.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good explanation of your faith, Abbas. Did it take incarceration for you to embrace religion? On the outs, did you ever envision God? Do you think you'll always pray five times a day? Will Allah forgive you if you forget one day?

I thought I was never gonna get caught. But when I got caught and locked up, I started caring

I Don't Give A...

A lot of kids say it, even grown ups. The reason why they say it, is because they don't care anymore. It's just that they are so into what they are doing bad — they don't think about the consequences. Or sometimes people say it to look hard in front of other people.

Today, I care about getting caught up on the outs. Before, I didn't give a f—! I thought I was never gonna get caught! But when I got caught and locked up, I started caring. Today, I still say ef this and ef that, but it's only on little things.

People say they don't care when they should be caring. If you don't care about anything, then it's just like you're saying you don't care about your life. So take it from me — think about it first; make good choices; start caring about your life and the outcome of how you live it.

-Peanut, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're still smarting from what happened to your other pieces. They were taken by someone still living like he doesn't care about anyone else, and not knowing that in the end, he's the one who'll pay a high price for what he thought were self-serving choices and actions. You didn't understand till the hammer hit. Now you know, so live right and don't ever quit.

In the System

But You Didn't Care

Don't you think that spending time in Juvenile Hall is a waste of time? What were you thinking when you were only twelve and you spent five hundred dollars in counterfeit money?

You were just a little kid. Then you were on probation. What next? You were in the system. You knew you couldn't get in any more trouble, but you didn't care. You never thought you would get locked up. So you just kept it up, and it was cool for about two years, just lightweight stuff.

But then when you were in high school, it went to your head! And that got you in a group home, 'cause you were joyriding in a stolen car. Then it was on to a handful of probation violations. In only seven months, you couldn't even believe it — you got released! Your group home got shut down.

But then for the next seven months, you were so off the hook you can't even remember it all. You stole one thousand dollars from your parents' church, mostly to support an overwhelming drug habit. That also led to another handful of probation violations. And don't forget that petty theft.

Now you find yourself in Juvenile Hall, going to another group home. But now I realize, this isn't "you" — this is me!

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At twelve, you couldn't see that what you were really buying with that counterfeit money was a reservation for future incarceration. Today, you seem to see that ripping and running isn't freedom, it's a fast track to the penitentiary. Why aren't you going to rehab? Your addiction will have you crazy again if you feed it! Staying clean is where clear thinking begins. And without a clear mind, you know where your story ends!

My Surprise

I remember a couple of years ago in the fall I started taking classes at the Academy of Arts College. At first I did not want to when I heard it was on Saturdays and then I heard what course I was assigned to so I became really uninterested.

My sister encouraged me to take the class and I look up to her so I went.

When I first got there, I looked at everyone and the first thing that came to my mind was "everyone here looks like a nerd." I made an overgeneralization which I seldom do.

After I started going to the classes for a couple of weeks, I started liking it. It actually became fun and the people who attended the classes with me showed me a lot of things I now appreciate.

Now I thank my sister who encouraged me to take the classes. Another thing I learned, which is surprising, is that just 'cause someone looks a certain way, that does not measure their interests.

-Thibo B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Good writing and great story. What did you learn in these classes, and are you still in contact with any of the other students? Do you think any of the other students were surprised that you were more than what you looked like?

Shut Up And Learn

Sometimes we all need to shut up and learn. I've noticed that a lot of criminals have a denial problem with being wrong. We always have to be right, or the stuff we do is okay because we were unfortunate, deprived or beaten.

I'm gone sit up here and take the funk because I understand that some things may not always have to be done, but we want it to be done so we don't have to face it.

I'm addressing this because today my counselor asked do we feel we need counseling. A few detainees answered no because we're too old to be told stuff. But that sounded weak to me because you would've never messed up if you knew what you really needed to do.

Some cool people that helped me out while I was in the max was JD, Big Head, Tru, Mr. Simmon, T, Burkett, and the hoopster man. An' man, it was shady when I first got there because of all of the BMP and DRB I was collecting over stress. Then I started ta follow the rules and ask the staff for advice and counseling when I need it.

When I took the first step, the staff took ten, an' they all really helped me out on the one with family problems (ninjas was mad up here dealing with my family problems). Then I got hella advice from my few friends that was up there.

-Pg B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sometimes you hit a home run, PG, and this is one of those times! Even though we sometimes think you should be listening more than talking (following your own advice), this piece shows that you do listen when you have to, and that you recognize that everybody, no matter how old, needs help (you can call it counseling) sometimes. We know the staff in max will be grateful to read this tribute to them for the help they gave you. As far as being in denial goes, nobody likes to face their own shortcomings and responsibility for bad things, but until they (we) do, there's no way we can make things better. Good for you for

Addiction

I was hooked on crys(tal)
Way back in my head
Lovin' all the boys
An' flippin' my hair
Complainin' to myself
Thinkin' life's not fair
I was flippin' and dippin'
An' smoking tha crys
I promised myself
I would never let a man
Treat me like shhh
Pero, now it's too late
'Cause I'm lost in this life
The world's too big
The streets are too long
An' I'm headin' down one
Strippin' and dancin' and swingin' on poles
Was one of my "Biggest Dreams"
And, no
I was not a hoe
(No disrespect to you girls out there)

-Guera, Marin

From The Beat: You've been in and out of Juvy a dozen times. Why can't you build yourself a good life on the outs? What is it about crystal that has you so sprung? How are you managing in Juvy without it? Do you want/think you need a drug program? You've written before that people always think you're happy because you're always laughing, but that no one really knows you. That's probably true. Can you find anything that means something to you besides guys and partying? How are you going to build up your life, so you can create a life you're proud of?

Live Long Die Short

Life is too short to live your life behind bars trying to live large. Forget the dumb shhh. When you get out, touch down and get a job quick! Leave the block shhh alone. That stuff gone be there when you get home.

Leave them drugs and shhh alone, and stop killing your own people. You should get tired of seeing your black brother and sisters on the news that you killed for a pair of tennis shoes.

Forget that shhh! Get paid the real way, so you can die a man. All money ain't good money. You would die quicker wit' yo' drug money.

-Tc B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Every word in this piece is good advice. Are you following your own advice? When and how did you come to realize that what's going down on the street isn't worth it? How do you plan to get paid the real way? What are your plans for when you touch down?

I pray none of y'all get caught up in the 3rd world prison system because if you do, that might be the last days of your lives!

Brazil Hell Hole

Brazil's prison system is in crisis. Four years ago, in its 1990 urban violence, report Amnesty International described the prison as being at a breaking point, holding double their official capacity in human conditions. Four years later, this situation was not improved.

In some respects, it has deteriorated. Overcrowding, lack of medical, and legal assistance, torture ill treatment of inmates, and harassment of vision or endemic. A frightening and rising proportion of prisoners carry the HIV virus. In the woman's prison of San Pablo, 39% of the inmates are infected with the virus, while in the males, 33% of the prison population. A study published in 1994 shows the majority of prisoners are youth, poor, and black!

A group of inmates in the Vidal Pessoal Central Prison of Mahaol, Amazonians held a peaceful protest against the horrific conditions against the police. How in Brazil, as shocked troops, they reportedly beat the inmates that were protesting. The inmates who had taken refuge in cells in Setton. They sued balloons filled with broken glass, hitting them with slingshots. Subsequently, they locked the inmates up, or threw tear gas grenades after they killed over 212 inmates from suffocation.

I gave you the info, so that you've realized, we need to stop these prison systems and find a different kind of rehabilitation for delinquents. It's inhumane and I pray none of y'all get caught up in the 3rd world prison system because if you do, that might be the last days of your lives!

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You should hope that nobody goes to any prison period. The prisons we have here are inhumane. Just the concept on locking people up is inhumane and ugly. But we do agree that third world people are the worst of the worst. Do you think that folks would behave better if the prisons in America were tougher? Would you? How do you think incarceration has affected you? How do you think you would have been affected differently if you were in a third world prison?

I Don't Care

I don't care
If I am black
I don't care
If I am white
I don't care if I am wrong
I don't care if I am right
I don't care
If he's fake
I don't care
If he's real
I don't care
About time

Hours

Min

Sec

Days

Nights

Months

And years

I don't care

I don't care

Who she is

I don't care

Who she's with

I don't care

About her at all

I just don't care

What he got

I don't care

Who he know

I don't care

What he make

And you tellin' me because

I don't care

I don't care

About you

I don't care

About day

I don't care

About nobody

I just don't care

I don't care

About the poor

I don't care

About the rich

I don't care

About middle class

I don't care

About

Guns,

wars,

people,

dogs and cats,

if you know me you know I don't care

about nothing

in this world

most of all the law.

-Bandit, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a piece! Well Bandit, see where not caring about the law has got you? Maybe you should start caring about some things. Care about getting your life straight, care about good food, beautiful people, good grades and see where that takes you.

All Bad

Life is like a military. My patnas, aka my souljas getting relocated to the cemetery, buried. East Oakland life ain't no story.

Why did they have to kill my patna Harold? He wasn't even that old, now he six feet under ground, his name is on a tombstone, bold.

I swear, if east Oakland was a cemetery, every turf would be buried. I'm having vision of me six feet deep soul rising like a furry vision blurry. I ain't trying to get buried in the cemetery.

I'm sick of living my life in worry. I swear when my cousin got shot in this game I thought about his daughter. When she grow, how will we explain how her daddy got done bad, in this game. Four to the chest five to the brain.

When I think about it, it make me mad. My little cousin don't got no dad, man that's hella sad. These days is all bad.

-Willie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Willie, damn! times are rough. What is the solution? Do you think it has always been this bad? When did it get this way? What can we do as individuals to stop all this bullshhhh? Is moving away the answer? Or is there something else we can do? What do you think? What will you do?

**I didn't care what it took.
I did care if I was killed or
anything, but all I really
cared about was getting
money.**

I Just Don't Care

Well, I just don't care, 'cause I guess it was the way I was brought up when I was younger. Like my father, I thought he didn't care about me and all he cared about was drugs. So I stopped caring about my life and started doing things like getting suspended from school every week. So I was like, forget school, so I quit. I was in the 5th grade, too.

I then saw my older brother selling drugs and bringing home a lot of money. Like two years after that, I too started selling weed and crack. I stopped caring about going home and I stayed out all night, getting money, not caring, only caring about the money. I now wasn't caring about going to jail, 'cause I thought I was never coming here, so I stopped caring about my life. I didn't care what it took. I did care if I was killed or anything, but all I really cared about was getting money. I stopped caring about everything.

I started using drugs. I was using weed and coke, my own supplies. Then, when I started coming to Juvenile, I realized that I was starting to be like my father: Not caring, just wanting to get high.

As I sit here tonight, I don't care about drugs anymore 'cause they messed up my life, and my family's life, too. That's all that I have to say!

-Silent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Crazy, sad story, Silent. It's great to hear that you don't care about drugs anymore. You don't need them. Focus on getting your life straight, and that will help you fix everything else up. Another thing to think about is your money addiction, because that, as you explain, causes a lot of trouble, too. Now that you've learned these lessons, try not to make the same mistakes again. You live and learn. Powerfully honest piece!

My Life And Me

My life as a child
Was not happy or fun.
My life was about the gun.

My life as a son
To my mother.
Never thought she'd recover
From my father.

My life,
Singin' the same old song.
Gotta move on, gotta stay strong.
Maybe.
Maybe.

Now I see the pain in her eyes.
Oh, I do see her sigh.
Mama turned around at me
And said, "Baby, don't cry"
Tearin' up the family tree.
My life and me.

I was seven when I saw someone die.
The pain I see,
Don't nobody ever cry.
No more.
When a loved one is gone.
No more.

My life.
Singin' the same old song.
Gotta move on, gotta stay strong.
Maybe.
Maybe.

-Courtney, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: What an excellent poem. You grasped our hearts with suspense as you intelligently repeated the uncertainty in your life by emphasizing the word maybe. What can you do to transform those "maybes" into certainties? Do you think writing helps you "move on, stay strong"? We're always saddened to hear how many of the people we interact with have to deal with deaths in their families, and witnessing a death at the age of seven is just too much. You had to be a powerful child to survive such images. How did that experience help or hurt how you view the world today?



Save Yo' Self

I'm seventeen with a son who I can't even hold
Left his mama over some rumors I was told
Now I regret it because I can't see him
And a future as a father is looking dim
Don't take it the wrong way, I wanna be a daddy
But it's hard when the baby's mama won't let me
But what I'm trying to say is "Take it slow"
'Cause in my eyes even a man can be a hoe
So choose before you take that leap
'Cause you can't raise a kid if ya can't stand on your own two feet
Take these words into mind, it'll save ya a lot of agony
'Cause sex ain't like playing a game on a Sony
Choose before ya take that leap, alrato

-Danny, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Danny, good writing and excellent advice. Unfortunately, like you, people often learn the hard way about what it takes to be a father or a mother. So what are you going to do when you get out to get back on your own two feet and be a part of your son's life?

you can't raise a kid if ya can't stand on your own two feet

I'm An Outkast

I'm an outkast to society
Whether I'm livin' high or sobriety
Sick to my stomach as I watch witnesses lie on me
Judge doesn't care as long as the trial ends with a conviction,
So he can drive to the golf course in his Benz
Oh, did I mention him and the DA are friends?
They sit in the courtroom exchanging devilish grins
But who am I to critique
my soul reeks of sin
I wanna start my life over,
but I don't know where to begin
I wanna be a square, but I can't even pretend
I tore so many quilts, a sewing
Machine can't even mend
Spare me all the excuses in this society
I'm supposed to take all these abuses
While I'm constantly labeled a nuisance
I'm an outkast, but God, how long
Do I gotta go through this

-Dolla Deesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Are you labeling yo' self an outkast or did somebody just tell ya, 'cause to us you can outlast these obstacles in the battlefield longer than any soulja. They can't judge where your heart's at 'cause all they care about is their wealth, don't go off what the system label you; go off of what you believe in yo' self. Work on getting free, and start breaking the chain, so you never have to come back, it's gonna be all on you to make a change.

I Didn't Care

living out there
i'd always swear
don't you dare
cross game
'cause i don't care
life ain't easy or fair
but i don't care
talk trash and i'll
bust you anywhere
'cause i don't care
they tell me
i'm a menace to society
but i don't care
i'm robbing you
and see that you're scared
but i don't care
that's what i'd say
but when you're wearing
the next man's underwear
twisting your hair somewhere
where you don't want to be
ask yourself — now do i care
and change your life
so you won't end up like me
'cause now i care
but about you
if you don't change
well i don't care
you'll just end up wearing
the next mans underwear
and believe me
you'll be missing family
friends girlfriends and freedom
you won't no longer say
i don't care

-Lil' Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It takes a man to say, that his I-don't-care days and ways were mistaken. It takes a man to admit when his heart is breaking, aching for the faces of family and friends — it takes a man to confess that it's no longer true he couldn't care less. Now you know how it goes. If you don't care, you're your worst foe.

I Don't Care, I Didn't Care

I didn't care about going to the Hall
Because I had the balls
To stay behind them walls
I didn't care because I thought
I was only going to the Hall one time
But when I got out — I caught another crime
So I had to do more time.
I went to court
The judge wanted to send me to Camp
Because that day he was acting like a tramp.
I had to do six months there
And six months in after care
But I didn't really care
So I ran.
One day I drunk some Hen
And I decided to turn myself in.
They brung me back to the Hall
And put me behind them walls.
Now I gotta do nine months at Camp just because I
ran but now I thought about it so I really care about
my life so I'm going to stay out of jail.

-Lil' Dee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that you stick with your goal of staying out of jail. In the end, what does a life of incarceration entail? How can you make sure that you don't come back? How can you maintain and stay on the right track? Can you remember how much you hate it the next time you decide to forsake it?

What's Fair

What's fair?
Nothing,
for people like us,
who don't have that much money,
because the rich have more say so than us.
Looking around
there are no rich people in the hall —
only people that don't have that much money.
You probably say it's our fault that we're in here,
but what do they spend the tax dollars on?
Not just the rich,
but give us — give us money too.
They spend money on stuff that we don't need
instead of helping us when we're young.

-Er, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: So, the way to change things is to organize folks who share your beliefs. Do the math. If you stand up for a fairer system and a vote is taken, the majority wins. Are there more people who believe the system is fair? Or are there more people who believe it's not fair? Get organized. You just might win. But to do that, you have to put your energy in the right place. That means, instead of banging, you organize.

The Outs

The outs is very complicated
Because of the outs, my dreams have faded
My goals and plans have been traded
For so-called fun and freedom, I've sat there and I've contemplated.
About the way things used to be
When I was oh so happy
And I liked me for me
Things will change hopefully,
And I can return to my family
And once again be on the outs,
But the good outs at home!

-Marisela GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The outs can be very complicated, and it's easy to lose sight of what is right. What will you need to do to stay focused and away from negative temptations? What goals and plans do you have and what will you need to do to fulfill them?

**My goals and plans
have been traded
For so-called fun
and freedom**

A Message to My Brothers (That Don't Care)

What's up my brother
what's up black man,
give me five on the back side
where it's black man,
where you been you haven't been in touch
let me know how you been doin' so we can catch up.
You don't know me but I know you because
I used to see your face in the mirror when
I was locked up
I been where you are but hopefully you'll
meet me where I'm headed.
But if you continue with the I don't
care mentality thinkin you can catch up to
me you can forget it.
Some people ask me why I waste my time
and ask me what's the deal.
I tell 'em I got love for you no matter
what and I always will.

-Lah, Virginia

From The Beat: You seem to be addressing all your brothers, and you do it with eloquence and an individual voice that carries across time and space. Are we correct in reading a challenge here to these brothers to meet you, either literally or figuratively, in a better place? (Another interpretation: You're addressing a part of yourself that you've seen fit, positively, to leave behind.)

I Don't Care I Give Up Easy

I'm a hard worker on basically every thing until it gets on my last nerve. I mean for some reason like school, I could care less for, because you have to read and write which annoys me because these are the two things that I can't stand.

So, like when I get to a question that's hard I stop. I don't even bother trying. When stuff like that happens I just say "I don't care." The reason's I say that is it gets old real fast because people like me don't like new things, like math, but after I learn it I like it but when I get a new kind of problem I give up very easy.

-Joe, Virginia

From The Beat: This is an honest expression of your feelings and we appreciate your willingness to share them. Everybody has to deal with insecurity in some ways, but almost everybody can make the effort to improve their skills in their own long-term interest. "New things" come into our lives all the time, and with patience and the right teachers you'll find pleasure in the learning process. Be patient, keep an open mind, and new learning will pay off for you.

**I look back
and see it was
a stupid thing
I did.**

I Used To Say That

I used to say I didn't care about a lot of stuff. I used to say I didn't care about gettin' locked up. I didn't care about nobody, but a few people. I didn't care if I got killed or nothing. Now, after being in here for five months, I find myself caring about shhh.

I was sitting at class break, and I seen my new PO walk past. I called him over and he told me I'm leaving at 9:30 tonight.

I been thinking about how much I miss the people I used to say I didn't care about. I've been thinking like I'm going to Pennsylvania and I wouldn't have even known. Like now I care about how long I got to be out there.

I guess I didn't care about getting locked up and stuff 'cause I always thought I wouldn't never get sent nowhere or be locked up for a long time. Now I already did five months in here and now I'm looking at a year to 18 months all the way across the country. I'm starting to realize all da stuff and people I used to say I didn't care about I really do.

-Tyree B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's strange how we take so much for granted in our lives. It's not cool to be locked up, but sometimes it can make you appreciate the small things in life.

How I Surprised Myself

When I was on the outs I remember when there were some people from the other side of town talking their mess. When I heard about this I was drunk. So I decided to walk over there and look for those people.

When I got to where they were at I went up to them. I was hoping I wouldn't get jumped. But I held my ground. I was surprised that they denied what I had heard, so I got mad and gave one of them a right to the jaw.

I thought I had it coming, but nothing happened after that, so I left proud of myself. I didn't get stabbed or nothing. Now I look back and see it was a stupid thing I did. I was really lucky nothing happened to me. Thank God.

-G, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: So, your surprise was that you got out of that encounter in one piece, and that you "stood up" to some guys you thought you had a disagreement with. You are right. You were lucky - lucky that those fellows were wise enough and compassionate enough to realize that you were drunk and thus not in complete control of your behavior. They behaved better than you did, most fortunately for you. By the way, thanks for telling us this interesting story.

Surprise

I surprised myself once when I came to the hall and got sent to camp. In that camp you have to earn your freedom by helping others, and you have to climb a rope, too.

I got to camp in early July and I was scared, because they told me that if I couldn't climb that rope every two months, I wouldn't earn my freedom. I told myself: you can't climb that rope. It was getting close to the first time for me to try. I surprised myself by climbing it. When I was getting to the end of the rope, I felt good about myself.

-Jorge, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sounds like the folks who made you climb that rope knew what they were doing. It's a great feeling to do something good that you thought was not in your power to do. Remember your experience with the rope the next time you feel like giving up on yourself.

The Reason People Don't Care

I think the reason why people stop caring is because they be feeling like they ain't got nothing left so they just do the first thing that comes to they head. I've been at that place before, it felt good at the time, but after, you regret what you did. Feel me.

Ain't no one that I can think of in this life that is perfect except God. I think that he's the one that started to let me see the light. He 's the only one I can talk to now thanks to my girl. She told me that he helped her, so I started to believe in him. I learned that over the years you got to believe in yourself, feel me. Ain't nobody else that live in this world should care about you more that you do, because you the one that lives it.

-Young Los B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, Los. Sounds like you are lucky to have a girl who shared her experience with you and now you're sharing yours with others. Thank you for teaching, and keep caring.

It's Dangerous

When people don't care it's dangerous. My partner didn't care, he was crazy. He didn't give a shhh about nobody, not even himself.

He had two teardrops tattooed on his eye because he claimed he killed two people. He would beat up his girlfriend, and I never knew why until I found out she gave him Chlamydia.

After that, he was suicidal; he cut himself all the time. One time we were kickin' it at the park and he slit his arm down to the bone and it scared the shit out of me 'cause he was bleeding a puddle on the ground. After a second, he passed out and fell to the ground. I called 911 'cause I didn't want him to die. The ambulance came and took him to the hospital. He was cool, the next day.

-Friend B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Man, that's a nasty story. Your friend was lucky you cared. Was he grateful that you got him to the hospital? Did he stop cutting himself after that? Has he started to care?

I Don't Care... Or Do I?

I can say that I have said, "I don't care" or "it's nothing." But now that I'm locked up, I started thinking about all those times I said I didn't care about myself. I said, "I don't care about my folks because they don't care about me."

Or so I thought. Now I can see that I do care about myself and that it is something that I'm here, and that I care more about my family because they is the only people that are in my side now.

I care for my future because now I see things clearly. I see my life ahead is so important. I care more now, because I want to have a family, and it's going to take my care so they can grow up with care.

Life is only lived once. You don't get a second chance. Life will suck if you just don't care.

-L-Gotti B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What do you think is the most important factor in your life that changed your outlook, that made you realize how important life is, in general, and how important you are, in particular? What did it take to make you care about yourself and your family? Could you have had this change of heart without getting yourself locked up?

Grow Up!

I hate this place
Because I'm sick of girls talking shhh
And trying to start something
When I really don't give a damn
About what they think about me
I'm sick of drama
But I don't give a damn
I've been here a month and a week
But I get released tomorrow
I'll never get locked up again
But there's some good things
That came out of my experience
I met a hot guy
And got back on my meds
I'm clean and detoxed
Made a new friend
So I get out tomorrow
And when I leave
I'll be like, "Screw you all"
Stupid girls
Trying to be ghetto
And something they're not
All I gotta say, is
"Grow up!"

-Audrey, Marin

From The Beat: It can be annoying and hurtful if the people around you are messy and always trying to get in your business and talking about you behind your back. Maybe they're bored, maybe they're jealous, maybe they're just curious about who you are. Maybe they want to be friends, but don't know how. Have you tried to get to know them or be cool with them? If you make an effort to be friendly — the messy stuff will stop.

I Believe

I believe that some people have a "don't care" attitude because it is easier to deal with life and go through it if you don't care about very many things. It is easier to be numb and not feel than to feel pain or anger or whatever else. Especially if there is nothing you can do to change the situation.

-G-Ball B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even though this is a very short piece, it is very full — of pain, of sadness, of resignation. Can it be true that "there is nothing you can do to change the situation?" We know how hard it is, but is it impossible? Aren't there choices you could make that would change your situation (like going to school, getting a job, or taking yourself physically out of your environment)? Are there things that society can do that would make it easier for you to change your situation?

THE Beat
WITHIN

To My Surprise

Hi, this is Nicole, and I didn't think I was going to be able to quit the way of the streets!

Recently, I was picked up on a warrant. At the time, I was living by the game of the streets. I was very involved in drugs and illegal activities. Now that I am incarcerated, I am able to get sober and away from the streets!

So I didn't think that I would ever have a chance to get away. But I guess God was on my side this time! I have been away from the gang and from drugs for about a week — and I feel great. I am glad this happened! Sincerely,

-Baby Gurl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: God was always on your side, but you never realized till you had this chance to get sober. And God's miracle isn't over! 'Cause when you see getting arrested not as disaster but an opportunity to stay free from the slavery of the street — your tortured soul has already begun to heal! Props to you on the inner hope and strength you've revealed! We're glad for you!

In The Hood

When I was deep in Oakland on my way to my brother's house, I got off of the 41 bus and I walked to the block — and some dudes walked up on me!

And they pulled out a gun and shot me two times! And they robbed me! But I seen them same ninjas that robbed me a few days later when I was on the bus again, and I could have done something to them — but I did not.

I chose not to, because I didn't need anymore negativity in my life. I was just happy to be alive!

-Joshua, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All these foolish mouths that claim revenge is a must, just stir up the dust and keep danger front and center in their lives. Yes, you're lucky you survived. And maybe it's because you walked away from revenge that you're still alive!

I'm Sorry

I messed up, yeah I know

But mom, I'm glad you let me go

I ran away, I had to grow

I love you mom and now I know

I tried to front like I didn't care

I acted stupid like stuff wasn't fair

But all you wanted was the best for me

You spent all that time and money

Mom, all I want to say is that I'm sorry.

-Mark B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How did you come to recognize that your mom has your best interests at heart? Saying you're sorry is a really good thing to do, but what will it mean when you get out? What specific changes do you plan to make?

**I'm 'bout to
do my time
instead of
running.**

People Who Don't Care

People who don't care have turned cold-hearted and broken-dreamed from the scandalous way they live. And livin' the scandalous life, you learn not to trust and not to like others. It's like you against the world.

The only people I think don't care is the ones that commit suicide. Then you realize everyone cares, even the suicidal, because they wouldn't have killed themselves if they didn't care about nothin'.

-Young Sochie B4, SF/YG

From The Beat: We agree with you that people who say they don't care really do care, even the suicidal. But the real scandal is that we allow whole generations of young people to grow up believing that there's nothing to care about, including themselves and their families. What do you think this says about our society, our country?

Yesterday, All My Problems Seemed So Far Away

Seems like yesterday I had my freedom,
Chicks calling the metro wanting 'Fro to heat 'em
Now I'm in jail, about fifteen hours in my cell
Thinking 'bout all the shhh I could be doing.

My mind playing tricks on me.

DA think it's funny

That I want be on the streets for a minute

Be cool, though, stay down.

Yada, I can dig it!

-Afro B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're sharpening your skills as a writer, and we can see it with every week that passes. We worry, though, about that "minute" you want to be on the streets because we've seen too many examples of how that minute gets stretched, until it finally snaps, and you find yourself in here again sharpening your writing skills...

**I have been away
from the gang and
from drugs for
about a week —
and I feel great**

The Night of My Life Was Screwed Up

When my homie died, that was f'd up! Then my auntie and my grandma died — and I felt like everyone was dying!

I stopped going to school and started getting into trouble in the streets. And then I had a warrant, and my mom started worrying about me. So I turned myself in, to get my time over with. And I'm 'bout to do my time instead of running.

But I'm gone — stay up to those that are locked up. Rest In Peace, Snoopy.

-Droopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're heart broke, and you went a little crazy. It's not hard to understand. But the strength you're showing in the face of your mom's anxiety and pain, is nothing short of heroic — not just turning yourself in, but the everyday effort of walking down the only road that leads to freedom. Props!

The Night Me And My Sister Went Too. . .

The night of my life was when me and my sister went to go see her boyfriend, Damoore, and a whole bunch of other dudes. She was scared to go where all them boys was at. So, she went to McDonalds; knowin' me, she knew I would go over to where the boys was at by myself.

And I said, "Ay, which one of you is Damoore?" And all of them ninjas turned around. Then he said, "Me. Why?" And I was like, "My sister, yo' girlfriend, wantchu." And he was like, "Where she at?" And I said, "In McDonalds."

So me, Damoore, and one other dude, walked to McDonalds. And Damoore was like, "Man, yo' sister got me walking hella far!" And I was like, "Man, she hella shy!"

And I had a big ol' Macy's bag full of drank because, before, we had went to Albertson's and hit a lick. So we had a big bottle and three different colors of Alize, Bacardi and gin. So me, my sister, her dude, and this other ugly dude that wouldn't stay off me, we all drank. Oh yeah, we had some E&J!

So we were up in the ninja's potna's house, kickin' it, and I was just drinking, in separate rooms. This ninja was hella ugly with a big ol' gap, and he wouldn't get off me! And anyway, it was kinda funny when I tripped over something and accidentally broke these ninjas' phone cord.

So, an hour later, somebody come and was like, "This ain't no hotel! Get the what up outta my house!" She wasn't talkin' to us though, she was talkin' to them ninjas.

So I don't really know what happened, but I guess I just got intoxicated and left my stuff there. And when I went back to get my thangs, I said, "Excuse me, ma'am, may I please have my stuff back?" Then she let me in and I got it all.

So I went back downstairs, and this ugly ninja was still on me. My sister and her dude was off to thei'selves. So anyways, this ninja was all up on me.

Then this dude was trying to kidnap me! And so Damoore and that ugly ninja beat the dude up, and we left. We got on the 82 bus, and then we got kicked off because I was talking hella trash to the bus driver. [To be continued.]

-T-Girl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your story leaves us worrying about you, because you are so clearly out of control — so intoxicated that you're not really in your right mind. It's like you're a piece of driftwood floating on a stormy sea, and you could end up anywhere. You could walk into (or start!) almost any kind of trouble, especially if you get separated from your sister and her friends. Or you might be in danger from this one "friend" who you don't even know or seem to like, who keeps coming at you. Will this end with a rape? We hope not. Whatever the end, we hope you learned a lesson about how vulnerable to catastrophe you make yourself and you drink yourself into near delirium. Please finish your story for us! Also let us know what you've learned from all this drunken drama. By the way, you do tell a good story and have us caring for you and worried about you.

the kid be spitting
but it's nothing
personal it's just
strictly business

World of Pain

at this time
in my life
i just don't care
because i'm living
in this world full of
so much pain
even though
i'm in the game
the game is where
you always end up hurt
the way you think
the game is all cool
and you end up in here
no matter how good
you play your cards
you gon' get got
because i did what i did
for three years
and finally got caught up
i thought i was untouchable

-Joycée, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your little poem brings the truth home to anyone ready to see reality, 'cause the game always ends in pain and brutality. In the street or in a cell, the game's a highway to hell. And no one's untouchable forever, no matter how clever!

Strictly Business

standing in the middle of the ring
flows go so smooth
probably thought a ninja was trying to sing
i'm trying to bling
naw scratch that i'm a fashow glow like j-lo
get low like i'm from frisco
put together twenty tracks
resurface with some of that two thousand and ten slap
look it's a wrap
like some gauze
naw it's a rapper like nas
gotta put the song on pause
just to recollect your thoughts
you got the okay to push play
real playa's get pay for the things they say
get off the freeway
hit the block fly through
this shhh a classic like the bayou
if you spit like i do
you something like a american idol
nobody can rival
this killa flow
this killa dro got a ninja's lungs permanently closed
mouth smoke 'cause the rap's so hot
famous rappers fall down
just like a drop top
the kid be spitting
but it's nothing personal it's just strictly business

-T-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've just thrown down a major challenge for any rappers who want to contest who's the best in the pages of The Beat. We know you've got talent to compete, but we wonder who can face your heat and come back sweet or hard — 'cause the way we see it, we've got future stars living behind bars. Stay focused and we know you'll go far. Thanks for the flow. Now watch for those who come back for the show.

Addiction

I feel inside
An addiction
Sucking juices out my mind
Slowly devouring my insides
Leaving nothing
I am cursed
And throw terrorizing fits
Repulsed by necessity
I want more
Decayed by cravings
I am a fiend
Needing
Wanting
I give in
Puff
Inhale
Blow
I've lost my dignity once more
Satisfied
Mystified
I am haunted

-Elsa, Marin

From The Beat: Great poem! You really break it down. How are you managing in Juvy when you have no access to the drugs that possess you? Why don't you set yourself up to enter a drug program for when you get out? Talk to your med tech, counselor, and family. Get the help you need now so that your future doesn't go down the drain.

My Life Is So Serious

My life is so serious at this age — I'm fifteen years old and still locked down in this Camp.

By me making those bad choices, it made me waste about one-and-a-half years. And those are supposed to be the best years of my life, and there is nothing I can do to make them up.

So now I have to look at my future life and see what I want to do! I already have a plan of what I wanna do in order for me to succeed in my future — that way I don't have to be in the system for the rest of my life because I am succeeding in my future!

So, for those locked down, just remember that you can always do something positive with your life — and it is all in your hands.

-Lil' Joey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are seeing things very clearly today. And don't you know, there are people twice your age plus, trying to find the courage to make the same decision you making now, after wasting decades! You have so many very good years ahead of you — follow through on that plan and don't waste them!

How to Stomp Dreams

catastrophic minds trapped in socio-logic
minds full of kryptic clouds
instead of wisdom and knowledge
some cats' tongues hold them hostage
so they express thei' pain
wit' too much body language
strapped and trapped between
reality and demons battlin' me
somewhere lies my eyes
beyond battle cries
searchin' the when's
who's how's and why's
a thug dies
and another steps into war ties
we teach how to stomp dreams wit' cleats
before we show shorties
how to look beyond thei' reach
so the cycle repeats
cover up the mistakes wit' poison and trees
practice what we preach
— peace

-Izarit, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You locate and display the deeper meaning, behind the smoky clouds of fire-breathing demons. The mistakes of one generation, end in the incarceration of the next! Even the best will be doomed to fail the test unless the present-day G's break these chains of 'hood disease. Walk away from death to a brighter day — self-blessed with true wisdom and happiness! Thanks for your inspired words. Now escape the curse!

What the Hall Is Keeping Me From

First off, being incarcerated is keeping me from the ones I love — my family and my girl. The messed-up thing about it is that this is a waste of time!

'Cause you don't gain anything, and you don't get the opportunity to better yourself — except for these fake schools that be teaching you third grade math and stuff. Other than that, you just stay in your room and come out to eat, if that — 'cause during lockdown you even eat in your room!

I guess I better enjoy my stay here though, 'cause the judge told me I'm going to CYA — and it ain't coo' in there — and when you're on lockdown in there, it's all bad — you even take showers in your sink ("bird baths") — and your life is at risk in there 'cause you could get shanked at anytime!

But, yeah, I be missin' my family hella much. And I'd do anything for another chance at home, but it's too late for that now. I also miss my old lady. I ain't gonna lie: I still have real love for her. But I ain't gonna expect her to wait for me. I just gotta expect the worst and hope for the best. That's what staff in here be tellin' me all the time.

When I get out from doing my little bit of time, I'm gonna straighten up — and that's gonna make my parents proud. That's all that matters to me at this minute.

I also want the homies to stay up and to know that I'm a be out soon, so that we can kick it — and smash on them fakes on the block. Until next time, loved ones, I'm ghostin'. One love.

-Scarface, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No question but there's a lot of wasted time when you're incarcerated, but whether or not it's a total waste of time is up to you. At the end of this piece, you say you're going to straighten up and make your parents proud because that's all that matters. Then you say you're going to kick it with your crew and smash on the block! You still have to get deeper in your thinking, 'cause you can't be a block monster with the homies and straighten up for your family — you have to choose.

**we show
shorties
how to look
beyond thei'
reach
so the cycle
repeats**

Livin' a Real Life

un-numerical thoughts
goin' through my head
i sit here and wonder
where will be the spot
i end up dead
finally restin' in peace
no more holdin' my head
no more feelin' delyrical
and wishing for a miracle
as my time is getting critical
what can happen instead
i'm making god a deal
that if i stay real
for him to kill
the pain that i now feel
is makin' me ill
my soul is dripping inside
asking me why
there's no joy in my life
since i was a little boy
i heard nothing but lies
but it's time to open my eyes
and realize that i
ain't livin' a real life
'cause i never experience
what true love feel' like

-Snoopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A man can rise from all the lies he's been told since he was only a few years old right up to the day they make him pay the price for believing in those same old lies until he thinks to thank God that he has survived to find his corrupted mind had made him blind. Then his heart starts to heal, and by God's grace he learns to feel love that's real!

The Streets of Home

man i miss mi familia
and also them streets
i miss walking the street
twenty-four/seven
trying to make that money
to support my daughter
but i can't really say i miss
them streets all that much
because i am trying
to make money the legit way now
i am tired of being incarcerated
another thing i miss
about the streets is just being on them
because i mostly used to spend
most of my time on them streets of home
that's where i got all of my game and knowledge from
that's all for this week but before i go
i would like to tell all the homies in camp
to pimp their program so they can
get back to their familias
and i would like to tell giggles and payaso
to be cool on their home passes
because i am seeing hella people from camp
down here in the hall again
saying they caught a case on a home pass
and i want to say that i will be up there at camp soon
one love and i am ghost

-Young Lil' Spanky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're beginning to see not only how your love of the street is real, but how it also takes you away from what you love, you feel! You know you can't make your money there — or your daughter will never a daddy's loving care! And you both deserve to have that love to share.

The Night That Changed My Life

the night that changed my life
was when me and some friends
was in the 'hood as in my neighborhood
an' some ninjas came by my 'hood
an' the people in the car was shooting
at one of my friends on the block
an' the people in the car killed my friend
an' that was the night that changed my life
after that night i didn't care 'bout nothin'
i didn't care if i lived to see the next night
that's when i started to feel like "F" everyone

-Lil' Vick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Who wouldn't feel half-crazy with grief and rage? But you should be saying "F" the game! 'Cause everyone isn't to blame, just murderous rivals in a scandalous game. You shouldn't feel the same, but don't just add to the pain!

I Think I'm Mad

I am obviously not glad,
so that probably means I am mad.
My anger is very hard to keep from blowing
and once it starts, you'll not know where I am going.
I have not gone off for almost eight months and it is very hard,
I don't like being away from my family and watched by a guard.
Sometimes I don't care about my life, but I do.
Do you know why? because I have a long life to get through.
I have not much to work for,
but it is enough to keep from hurting myself anymore.
Nobody says it is easy to do what we do,
but all you have to do is work hard and be true.
I have a great heart,
and I hope it will stay that way till I am an old fart
I can do this if I try,
because I will not give up and die.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Logan, you are answering your own questions and that shows a lot of maturity. Everyone gets angry; it's what we do with that energy that separates one person from another. I can see that you process your own emotions very well and that is fantastic. Continue to regulate your emotions on paper; it's a great outlet and no one can ever take that away from you.

**the people in the car killed my friend
an' that was the night that changed my life
after that night i didn't care 'bout nothin'**

Just Too High

the night of my life
i was off a pill
for about thirty minutes
i was cool
then things got unreal
i was just too high
off a triple-stack red cupid
i thought i was gon' die
the night of my life
i smoked about thirty blunts
and still didn't feel any more high
so we got a dubb bottle of remy
and did the fool all that night
the night of my life
we picked up some broads
and told them it was cool
so we could get in thei' draw's
the night of my life
i had about thirty or forty rocks
i was floating so hard
sold them all
next thing you know
five-oh hit the block
they tried to run up on us
the night of my life
i had to run for it
hit a couple of gates
i was not trippin'
'cause five-oh was not playin'
they hit up the block
checking ninjas out for rock
when i stop' running i notice'
i didn't have nothing to run fo'
i was so high i got home fell asleep
had a dream they kicked in my doh

-Darryl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They didn't kick in your door that night, but your dream was warning you that your life was not right. Now here you are in the Hall, writing about the night you balled beyond control. You didn't die that night or get caught for what you sold, but you also didn't see the warning sign writ bold: Slow your roll!

**If I had the knowledge that I now have,
back three or four years ago — I probably
would not be in the situation I'm in now**

Surprised To Be Here

My biggest surprise is that I'm in this cesspool. If I had the knowledge that I now have, back three or four years ago — I probably would not be in the situation I'm in now.

I wish I would have known how to avoid the cops and their games. I wish I could have stayed low-key instead of trying to floss and show everybody I had a little hustle money that I got from the streets.

I surprised myself by ending up here and by letting me play myself to the point of being in jail! Stay up and keep your head up.

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have learned some lessons about the high price of feeding your ego by trying to impress others. But if you're planning to return to your street hustle after ROP, then you will have wasted your best opportunity to stay free.

Missing Home

i miss my home
i miss the way
i wake up at twelve p m
the way that nobody
was there to wake me up
the way that i get to eat
how much i want to eat
the way i get to watch
t v until i go dump
the way i get to stay
in the shower as long as i wanted
the way how i use' to run
around the house butt naked
the way that i leave
the house anytime i want
the way i come home all high
and eat everything we have
the way i bring my homies
when my parents weren't home
the way i got to kick it
in the front until midnight
the way i got to go
home anytime i wanted
the way my dad use' to baby me
the way my mom use' to yell at me
until i started to work around the house
(but i'd still do it)
the way i use' to take the cars
and smash all around the 'hood
the way i started funk in front of my house
so beat within that's what i really miss
— and my family i love you
mom and dad and sisters and brothers

-Young Ferny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you get the chance to go back home soon, don't just go back to what you used to do — 'cause this stop in the Hall is just a warning of a longer and deeper fall if you can't change. You can spend a long time feeling this pain, missing it all for so many days you forget how to feel any other way. Or you can decide to hold onto most of what you've got outside, by letting some of it slide! It's well worth a try.

I Say I Don't Care

I know plenty of times when I said, "I don't care!" But most of the time, I really don't mean it. I think when I really don't care, is when I'm in here — in "the Hall"!

Every time I'm in the Hall for small stuff, the courts try to do me — and I hate being depressed. It makes me stress way too much. And when I stress a lot, I feel like dying. And that's the main reason I say I don't care — sittin' in my room thinking 'bout my family, my baby'momma, just everything!

The main thing about this, is you're sittin' here all week; and when you can use the phone, really most people can't — because you have to have pre-paid minutes! I think that's unfair, because the phone company be laggin'. So by the time you get out, you' money is already used. And that's one of the reasons why I say I don't care.

-Young June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you see the pattern of getting caught up for small stuff, then getting stressed by the court system over it, and spending too much time in the Hall, plus too much money on phone calls — why keep doing what you do? Or do you say, "I don't care," when you're out there risking your freedom, too?

I Caught a Big One

the time
when i got surprised
was when i
was fishing a line
at the marina in berkeley
by the bay
i was sitting and waiting
for a fish
to come my way
and bite
but i kept waiting
and waiting
it felt like for days
and nights
until i felt my line
jump
and i thought
what's up
and pulled
my line in
and it was a
six-inch perch
dangling
at the end
of my line
i was surprised
it was my first time
i never went
fishing before
then i put the line in
once more
and started waiting
this time i'm smoking
a black and tan
and i get all
light-headed when
i feel my line jump
in my hand
and i know
it's a big one
again but
i'm so light-headed
that i just
didn't get it

-Tommy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a simple but great little two-in-one fish story: both the big one you got and the one that got away. It even has a moral — smoke, and you get played like a joke!

Mama

Mama, you said you love me; you told me you was coming up to visit me. I sit in my room and look at four walls and pray to God that I will see you walk in the door. It's time for me to move on. I will always be your son.

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry that your mother hasn't come to visit you. Maybe something happened. Hopefully next week. Why don't you show her this so that she can understand how hard it is when she doesn't follow through?

Responsibilities Getting In The Way

See, when I was young, I really didn't know the difference between right and wrong. But now that I am older, I know and I still do wrong by selling dope.

But I don't just sell dope because I want to stunt or ride on dubs. I sell dope because I got kids that need to eat and I take care of myself. See, it's like this, selling dope is not what I had planned for my life 'cause I always thought I would be more in life, like a ball player. But that didn't go as planned, so I went out and hooked up with some OG's who showed me how to make it in life at that time. So I started doing my thing, getting all this money trying to make a living for me and my kids.

Then one day I got locked up, but that wasn't going to stop me, because I needed that money. So I got out, still doing the same thing, and now I'm in max with some folks, and now we all are doing some real time. My name is Lil' Craig aka C-Money the Don. I really see where money gets me — on my way to CYA for selling dope, so you all need to think about it and write your boy back. One love.

-Lil' Craig the C-Money the Don, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, we hardly know where to start. It's crazy how big-time responsibilities can destroy our dreams. We just wonder when and why having unprotected sex became more important to you than becoming a ball player. Children are a blessing, but they can be better appreciated by you, and they can appreciate you better, when you have pretty solid footing as the person you really want to be. At the same time, letting go of one dream doesn't mean you have to let go of all of them. What else would make you "more in life"? Can you imagine yourself as a teacher, coach, fireman, mechanic, computer programmer? Can you dream yourself into holding down a legitimate job, being a good father, husband, and community member? It may not be as glamorous as being a ball player, but it could be satisfying. By the way, we don't know how old you are, but you may not even have to give up your sports dream. The one thing that's obvious is that you have to get off the path of incarceration you're currently on.

Mother From Above

Ay, what's up, this Culero from Hayward! Well damn, this subject is some shhh about fathers. Well, I wish I grew up with a father, but my dad is a heavy smoker, so my mom left him and I can't be mad at her because I realize that she was looking out for my brother's health and mine also. So I do thank her, but now it's too late because I follow his footsteps.

But now, damn, all that I wanna do is follow my mom's footsteps. She was there through thick and thin, and when my heart bleeds.

Don't get me wrong, even though my dad never been there for my family or gave my mom money "child support," I can't really hate him because he did bring me into this world and I'm grateful. But I just hope that he could have been there for my brothers and I, and I just want to thank my mom for playing the part of my dad and always being there for me, and behind me in court. Love you, mama!

-Lil' Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're happy to hear you don't hate your father; that would just be another way of hurting yourself. Do you ever try to contact him, even if it's just writing him? What do you think it will take for you to get off the path your dad was walking on? Whatever happens though, Chris, you have a good attitude and a loving mom you appreciate, so it's not all bad.

**selling dope is not what
I had planned for my life
'cause I always thought I
would be more in life,
like a ball player**

No Departin

i'm missing my boys
and i'm not feeling it
feelin' like strappin' up
and going on one
but my mom say'
let god deal with it
they say it's a circle
but don't get it wrong
retaliation is payback
my ninja is gone
but i'm'a still listen to mom
it's conspicuous
we ridiculous
even if it is god's business
we feelin' it in our heart when
it ain't no departin'

-Young D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What goes down, comes 'round. If you do leave it to God, the next go 'round won't come down on you. God's truth! So for your sake and your momma's, too; give God his due.

A Young New Father

I am a 17-year-old young man, also a father. I have a eleven-month-old daughter, and I've been locked up for about five months now and I only get to see her on visiting days. That shhh hurts me so much, not being able to be home to take care of her.

My next court date is on July 29th. That same day is my daughter's first birthday. That hurts me so much that I can't be there for her first birthday because her first birthday means so much to me. But hopefully on that same day when I go to court the judge will show me some love and send me to Camp so I can spend all the other holidays with her for the rest of my life, because I hate being incarcerated, not being able to spend all these beautiful days with my daughter.

I just hate when she comes to visit and she leaves and I don't go with her. That's why when I get out I'm going to be the best father I could be, and also be the best husband to my soon-to-be wife. So once I get out, best believe I'm going to stay out. Well, I have to go. I just want to say love you Gabriella and Maressa. Until next time, bye.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We all make mistakes, but we don't all learn from them. So make sure you learned from this mistake you made. There's nothing you can do now. You can't turn back the hands of time, but you can focus on the future. So stay focused on getting out as soon as possible for your wife and your daughter. And when you are out, focus on staying out so you won't miss any more birthdays and holidays.

Strikes bite into my flesh like jaws

Now Why Lil' Homie Had To Sell "D"

Now tell me why lil' homie had to sell "D"? Neva knew his daddy and his momma was a dope fiend. Neva gained weight 'cause he didn't eat healthy, on the first of the month he just wondered where the mail be at. Now tell me, why lil' homie had to sell "D"? Is it 'cause he saw ninjas with his mom's grocery money, or 'cause he always caught his moms smokin' in the crack house.

When he walked by his old house, all he heard was a mouse and two dope fiends gettin' drugged out the house. Scary, no this is a reality where I'm from. Back then parents was just too high to be thinking bout they sons. So we laid on the block waitin' fo' another knock to buy these last few rocks so we could kick 'em. Older homies embrace my gangsta and put me on a hustle, that's why my name is Charlie Tussle.

Rule one, always tuck your bundle, rule two, make sure it's unda. Rule three, if po po know yo' face on the block be unda, wit yo' shhh. Tuck the chops when it get hot.

Tell me why lil' homie had to sell "D" is it 'cause he was young, black and in his teens? I don't know why, somebody please tell me.

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice piece! Do you think that all young black teens living in Oakland feel that their choices in this world are limited? Did you always feel this way or did you once have dreams that you'd be elsewhere? Do you think that all the little homies will always be on the block or do you think that they will eventually find other goals to achieve?

The Golden State

California, the golden state

Where prison walls and keys hold my fate

Prop 21 said we old enough

To be charged as adults, damn that's messed up

Mr. Governor? Round of applause?

Man, he don't care about y'all

"Let's just pass these laws"

Strikes bite into my flesh like jaws

Can't sleep at night I might slip and fall

Once I'm released and come back to the mall

But I ain't the one shoppin'

It's the warden trying to see who will be next for lockin'

We worth 80G's a year, of course they jockin'

Got to retire from throwin' dimes like John Stockton

Hopefully one day I will see a release date

I am not going to get my hopes up, especially in the
Golden State.

-Dolla Deesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a sad and sadly true description of our once beautiful state. The metaphor of strikes biting into your flesh is powerful. What trips us out in this piece though is that you criticize the system for seeing you as nothing but money, but then you sign your name as Dolla Deesa. Do you see yourself as nothing more than dollars, too? Damn, we hope not.

**Tell me why lil' homie
had to sell "D" is it
'cause he was young,
black
and in his teens?**

Three Lil' Words

i don't care who knows
i don't care who stares
i don't care who's there
so beware
will you be there for me
when my days are hard
or when my nights are long
well if you're not
i don't care
so long
but don't feel bad or sad
be happy
but if you're not
i don't care
you like to stare
go ahead
'cause i don't care
you like to talk
might as well just walk
'cause i don't care
so if you feel me
too much stop
'cause i don't care
like alicia keys
"i don't know your name"
guess what
i don't care
do i have friends no
enemies yes
do i care no
so you wanna know something
i don't care
so you say you love
really i don't care
been there done that
but after all of this and that
i learned a very valuable lesson
which is these
three lil' words
i — don't — care

-Ben

From The Beat: It's a great defense, not to care; it helps you stay detached from hurtful words and acts. Use it as a tool at appropriate moments, but as a way of life it will leave you in doldrums. For the highest cost to pay for having loved and lost yesterday, would be — never to love again. Or, when days are hard and nights are long, care enough to be your own best friend — so you can carry on. But we do feel you, even if you don't care.

**i learned a very
valuable lesson
which is these
three lil' words
i — don't — care**

I Never Knew Right From Wrong

Well, I never really knew right from wrong. I always thought the wrong was the right, and the reason why I say that is because I came up in Oakland and everything was wrong, but you would swear it was right.

Like for example, when I was coming up, when you rob somebody, that was the right thing. We look at it like you get money out' the deal. Or, when you steal a car and do about 100 high speed and you get away, and you thinking that's the right thing because you got away. Or when you stand on the corner all day and serve knock after knock, and now you feel good because yo' pockets is big as a lock in a sock. And that's just the way we live, and things a' never be the same.

-Lil' Dada, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like you can justify everything you do. We're not sure if you mean this or if you're just playing. We ain't knocking anything you're saying, but trip about it, when you rob somebody for their money, you're taking whatever they have and they worked hard for it. When you steal a car, you stealing someone else's car, it could be a single mother of three who has to drop her kids off to school every morning, and then go to work, get off work, drive her kids to daycare, 'cause she gotta go to her second job. She works two jobs so she could pay rent and feed her kids. But if you steal her car, she can't do jack! We aint saying it's wrong to get money, but get it and don't knock over the next person that has shhh. Because most likely, that very little shhh that person has is the only shhh they have. They are in the same position as you, they're struggling.

Aprovechen Las Oportunidades

Bueno les estoy escribiendo por última vez porque ya me voy a ir al Rancho y talvez esta semana me lleven. Nada mas les quiero decir que aprovechen sus oportunidades que les den y aprovechen sus vidas porque cuando uno tiene un montón de oportunidades uno tiene que aprovecharlas.

Muchas veces a nosotros no nos importa cuando caemos preso la primera vez, pero cuando caes y caes y te llegan a dar años nomas dices, "que tonto fui por no haber aprovechado las oportunidades que tuve." La vida es una escuela, tú aprendes algo nuevo todos los días.

Muchas veces alguien te da consejos como a mí y nunca escucha los consejos hasta que pasan las cosas. Por ejemplo mi mamá siempre me decía que si seguía cayendo preso me iban a tener por mucho tiempo y nunca le hice caso hasta ahora que caí y voy a estar por un montón de tiempo. Me estoy dando cuenta que ella estaba diciendo la verdad.

A todos los que estan en la juvenil, no se olviden de mí aunque yo sé que estan hablando cosas a mi espalda. Eso no me importa. A los que me quieren yo también los quiero.

From The Beat: Que bien que te hayas dado cuenta que en esta vida se debe aprovechar las oportunidades que la vida te trae. La verdad es que el quien no las aprovecha, ni siquiera se dará cuenta que fueron oportunidades, y como dice el dicho, "camarón que se duerme, se lo lleva la corriente." Esperamos que en verdad te des cuenta que lo que realmente tu madre te decia, era lo mejor para ti y para nadie más. Te agradecemos por darnos un poco de consejos, ojalá que estoy consejos sirvan mucho a todos, y que realmente lo tomen en cuenta.

Take Advantage Of Opportunities

Well, here I am writing for the last time because I'm about to leave to the Ranch, and maybe they'll take me there this week. All I want to tell you is to take advantage of the opportunities they give you, and enjoy your life, because when you get opportunities, that is when you need to take advantage of life.

For a lot of us, we don't care about getting locked up the first time, but when you get caught again and again, and they give you years, all you say is, "how dumb I was for not taking advantage of all the opportunities I had." Life is like school, you learn a new thing every day.

There are times when people give you advice, like they gave me, and they never listen until things happen. For example, my mother would tell me that if I continue getting locked up, they were going to lock me up for a long time, and I never listened to her until this time when I'm going to do a long time. I'm realizing that she was telling me the truth.

To all those who are in Juvenile Hall, don't forget about me even though I know you are talking smack behind my back. I don't care about that. To those who love me, I love you, too.

-Popeye B5, SF/YGC

Vida

I live a crazy life so I'm 'a die at an early age
I seen my book of life, it only goes up to the 20-something page
It's a shame mi hefta gotta bury me
'Cause I'm 'a be dead by the age of twenty, see
And I'm seventeen so I'm 'a be dying soon
But I'm 'a keep my head up until I meet my doom
Porque I chose mi vida
If you don't want this life, I suppose you choose anotha
'Cause if you ain't dead, you in a cell
Headin' to la pinta, no more livin' well
'Cause that's the only thing this la vida loca brings
So choose tu vida wisely before you're dead or the system is
pulling your strings
Choose your fate a'rato

-Danny, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Danny, you are only 17 years old now. Although we know it's really hard to get out of the gang life, it is not too late, and it's not impossible, to turn your life around for the good. No one knows for sure when death will come knocking at his door. Try to start thinking positive about your future. Life is difficult and it can be made even more complicated by our upbringing and eventual choices, but are you simply giving up? You sound tired of living the "vida loca." Take time to listen to those who love you and don't want to bury you at a young age. Let them instill hope in you for day-to-day.

Caring

When people say they don't care about something it could mean a lot of things.

It could, one, mean they really do care and they are just trying to convince themselves otherwise.

Two, they really don't care and this could be because caring means worrying and stressed out and we really don't want to have to worry.

Or three, they have too many things to handle and taking on another isn't even an option.

If you ask me . . . I care when I need to. But a lot of times I want to get rid of my problems. Withdraw from the world, that's what people do drugs for. I don't necessarily think it's right, but it's life. It's my life.

-Dominick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Dominick, there are different reasons why people choose not to care. What is it that you care about? Do you ever find yourself caring about something that you wish you didn't? It's your life, what do you choose to care about?

The Night I Almost Died

The night of my life was when I got shot in the back and almost died, but lucky I survived. But one of my peoples died — he got shot in the back of the neck and died 10 steps later. That really hurt me but I made it.

I had a chip on my shoulder didn't have respect for nobody but I met somebody who taught me to feel again because when I lost my friend I didn't care for anybody and I showed it on a day to day basis.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like one helluva night that you'll never forget. How do you keep the memory of your friend alive? How can you protect yourself from a similar faith? Who was this person that taught you to feel again? We would like to hear more about him/her.

Una Sorpresa

A mí me pasó una sorpresa cuando yo dije que los exámenes finales de la escuela, no me iba a copiar y resulto que a las finales terminé copiando. Hay veces que ciertas cosas es malo hacerlas, lo mejor es hacer las cosas como es debido y no hacerlas fuera de lo correcto. Yo nunca pense que lo iba a hacer copiando. Es una cosa no favorable para uno porque si lo hace copiando no estás aprendiendo nada y todo lo que estas haciendo viendo tu libro y no lo esta haciendo con sus propios pensamientos.

Hay veces que uno dice que no le importa algunas cosas pero en verdad si les importa. Uno dice que no pero por dentro sabe que si, pero también hay cosas que si en verdad a uno no le important como decir cuando te deja una chava, que talvez no ha querido nunca.

From The Beat: Lo mejor es hacer las cosas por uno mismo porque esa es la manera como uno puede progresar en esta vida porque uno no se puede pasar todo el tiempo haciendo trampas. Lo mejor es hacer algo por si mismo y tener esa sabiduria que servirá para el resto de tus dias.

A Surprise

I was surprised when I told myself that I wasn't going to cheat on my final exams from school, and as a result, I ended up cheating. There are times when some things are bad to do. It's best to do things right and never do wrong things. I never thought I was going to make it by cheating. It is not a challenging to anyone, because if you cheat, you are not learning anything, and all you do is look at your book and not use your own mind.

There are times when people say that they don't care about some things when they do really care. They say "no," but inside themselves they say "yes." In reality, there are things that people say that they don't care about and they mean it. A good example is when a girl leaves you, someone you never cared about, and you don't care about her because you never cared for her.

-Cristian B5, SF/YGC

**If you don't want this
life, I suppose you
choose anotha
'Cause if you ain't dead,
you in a cell
Headin' to la pinta, no
more livin' well**



Madman

I lost you to the street I know,
and I wish you were here because I miss you so.
You always told me, don't let anyone bring you down,
and you helped me keep a smile instead of a frown.

I thought of you as the best,
and then one day you were stabbed in the chest.
My mom came to visiting and told me you died,
and I went back and cried.

I know you have kids to teach
Or take on a vacation to the beach.

So many tears I have shed,
knowing that you were dead.

I know you are not there anymore,
and I am proud to know that God is waiting for at heaven's front door.

I have loved you from the start,
and you will always be here in my heart.

I will not declare defeat,
because we lost you to a mean street.

I will see again someday,
but until then, here in my heart you will stay.

I will visit you at your grave,
and I will always remember that you were brave.

I thought our homies were true,
and now look what they have done to you.

May you rest in peace (RIP) always,
and you have fun running up and down God's hallways.
I remember Tata raised you and I up when we were small,
he taught us to walk not fall.

We are always together,
no matter what, always and forever.

-Logan and Arturo, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Logan and Arturo, you lost someone that was dear to your hearts. Now you should look at all of the good things that they did and model them to make sure that their memory is kept alive in a positive way.

What I Feel

Let out your tears.

'Cause everyone as well has fears.
Hate these halls.

Even my room with all these walls.
I don't like being here.

That's my first fear.

Believe me my soul has died.

Even just laid down and cried.

I don't want my moms to see me here.

And this is my second fear.

Which is way too much pain.

For me to withstand.

I feel like to her I failed.

That's why I only wanna talk through a
letter mailed.

This is the last.

Let this poem get past.

From you

To whoever else is in here, too!!

-Angel, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Angel, you have allowed your spirit to die because of the mistake(s) that you have made. Just remember that your spirit can come alive again. Many times, we, as humans, feel that if we make one big mistake, our lives are over. But you will eventually be free from these walls, and that knowledge can help you work on setting your spirit free again right here and now.

Think Twice

You get mad when you find yourself on probation
Huffing and puffing 'cause you're stuck in a strenuous situation
Maybe if we thought it out before we acted

Plan better next time and be responsible for your actions

You wouldn't be stuck in the position you're in

And get pissed off at yourself again and again

Time after time it seems we keep getting the same result

And they fling you around the system like a catapult

There's more ways to make it

Than sellin' rocks and ballin' blockin

'Cause you'll end up locked and someone's making a profit

We need to try harder, think twice and get ourselves jobs

'Cause it always seems to me that the poor's getting robbed

And remember we're just an itch in the DA's hair

He get's paid to show up and of course he don't care

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice flow! You got some great advice here. Sometimes all it takes is to think before we act. Strenuous situations ain't nothing nice, but if we can discipline ourselves to think and be responsible for our decisions, we would all be better off. Try harder! Some people don't care, which is all the more reason that we should! Teach on!

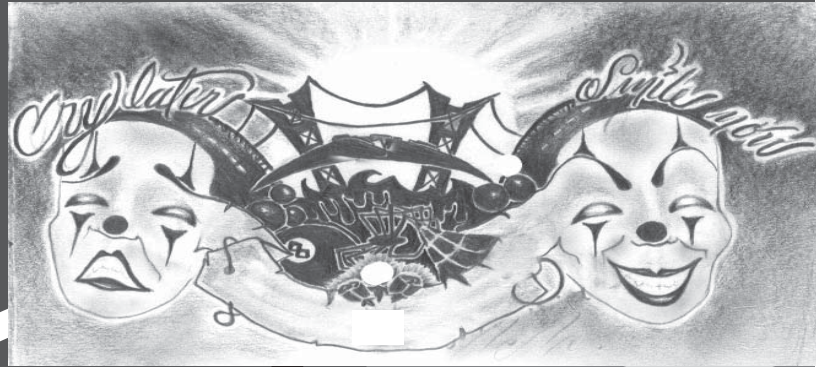
**There's more ways to make it
Than sellin' rocks and ballin' blockin**

Soul Mates

Soul mates never dissipate
And they never part
The spiritual bond that connects the two
Is connected heart to heart
It matters not dead or alive
The bond cannot be broken
And you feel the pain of the other
Even when words are not being spoken
You can deny in your head
But never in your heart
What God puts together
No man can tear apart
Soul mates never dissipate
And they never part
The spiritual bond that connects the two
Is connected heart to heart
Sure, you may have another lover
But the eternal bond of your soul mate
Gels the existence of your life
Flesh will perish
We all must die
But the spirit of a soul mate continues
Because your soul mate lives within you
For man was not meant to live alone
So your soul mate you must embrace
To ignore the existence of your soul mate
Is to doubt your very own faith
Soul mates never dissipate
And they never part
The spiritual bond that connects the two
Is connected heart to heart.

-Red Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Damn that's a deep poem. That's real right there though. "You can deny in your head but never in your heart" that's a true phrase right there. Right on lil' homie for teaching us something. Keep writing 'cause you got skills. How do you treat your soul mate? Do you think that you have found your soul mate? Will you eventually marry your soul mate?



Stay Out

I'm in my cell losing my sanity
Going to sleep to escape reality
Being in here seems like hell
'Specially locked up in an ice cold cell
It isn't cool to be locked up in the Hall
You can't even make a regular call
Sitting and waiting for the judge to decide my life
Has me waiting long 'cause he don't know my strife
Thinking it's a joke 'cause I'm another Mexican that's broke.
But I'm going to prove them wrong
Once and for all, I am not ever coming back to the Hall
People coming back here to earn fame
Acting like it's a crazy game
Don't get it through their heads
That we can all end up in a grave
Waking up one day with your hands and feet bound
Next thing you know you're six feet underground
Your parents come to your grave and fall on their knees
Crying and waiting for you to rest in peace

-Brian, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: That is advice to live by, but it seems like it is easier to give advice than to receive it. Do you take your own advice about staying out? We want you to know that it's as easy as you make it, but it takes preparation. You have to have a solid plan in order to get on the right track. Do you think everything will fall into place when you get out? What do you think will be the hardest thing about being free after being incarcerated?

I Care Again

Last year I gave up caring because I caught another case. I thought I was gonna get locked up for a long time. I stopped caring about my life and my family.

Usually, people go to YA for fighting with a counselor, but I hired a lawyer. Now I care about my life because I got it back. It feels good to care again. I got loved ones comin' up here to visit me again.

For a while, they'd stopped visiting because I stopped messing with my girl, so she wouldn't bring the kids to see me. Then, she started talking to my mom and she brought the kids.

I have two kids, Jamaria and Jasmine. When I saw them, it was cool. I see them more in here than out, so I don't really know them. I don't know if I feel a connection with them. They are hecka young. I need to get tested to see if they're really mine. If they are mine, I dunno. I still got shhh I gotta finish before I can take care of someone else.

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good that you care now. You are making progress. You have a lot of responsibilities to take care of when you get out. And the responsibilities will not stop, ever! And you are right you need to finish getting your mind straight and then take care of your kids. And we hope that the next time you're in a position to be with a woman that you'll remember to protect yourself so you won't have more kids you don't think you can take care of.

I still got
shhh I gotta
finish before
I can take
care of
someone else.

All Jeremee

Jeremee Timms

September 29, 1988 - June 2, 2004

They say the good die young but why you
When I heard what happened, wasn't shhh I could do
The first that told me was my mother
I thought hell naw — not my brother
Second of the month, June 2004
From then to now my heart has been sore
First Mikey then C, and now you too
Three patnas in four months — this can't be true
But now I'm here at Juvenile Hall
Staying tall through it all
Just for you I'ma turn my life right
I love you big bro see you next life

-Brian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's such a tragic shame that so many young folks are losing their lives left and right to the streets. How can you protect yourself from such a terrible fate? How can you make sure that you don't put yourself in predicaments where your life is being put at risk?

**When I seen that, I, myself, or
other people, have bad trips on
drugs, I feel hurt inside
because I feel that we either need
someone in our life or we need
help, but no one cares.**

Outside Of Oakland

The first thing I'm gonna do when I get out is get in touch with some of my family members. I'm gonna make a little money, buy a van and travel. The first place we're gonna go visit is Las Vegas, Nevada because that's where all the money at.

Then we're gonna go to Portland, Oregon because I was at a college football game and I saw some of their cheerleaders and that was enough to make me wanna visit that state. After that we're gonna go to Seattle, Washington I don't know why, but I just want to go there.

Next stop Down South and you know why? The ladies, the food, and the experience. First stop Houston, Texas because when I was younger I visited there and four words "I gotta go back."

Next up New Orleans, Louisiana because I've heard there's good food, pretty ladies, and they say it's a lot like where I'm from — Oakland.

I know you pretty much guessed it, but I'm gonna tell you anyway Miami, Florida because I saw Bad Boys 2, All About The Benjamins, and it's pretty — I mean a lot of sexy women. A little bit of back tracking — but it's okay.

Next stop — Chicago, Illinois. Two words Michael Jordan. More and more places are coming to mind like Little Rock, Arkansas, Nashville, Tennessee, St. Louis, Missouri, and last but not least Brooklyn, New York.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We think it would be a great experience for you to get out of Oakland for a while. You sound really excited about traveling. What do you hope to learn from going to these places? Do you like sight seeing? Do you ever dream about leaving the country? Which place do you think you'd enjoy the most out of all the places you'll go?

Shining Like Stars

Every night I sit in my room wonderin' how did my life just turn from how it was movin' to a whole 'nother way of movin' in a blink of an eye. I never thought it would be me, but there goes to show you never say never, but what I'm tryna say is how life works in mysterious ways, because I went from getting released from Camp to out on the street havin' things and having fun then boom! In a blink of an eye I'm locked up because all these ninjas out here hatin' on a youngsta because I'm out here shinin' like the stars so ninjas figured they could stop my shine by steppin' on my toes.

But me being a bigger man I just dust them off my shoulder and keep it movin' and know that I'm in here they think that I wasn't gonna see the streets again, but guess again — God was on my side and he set me free by lettin' me be and lettin' me see the light and see the real ninjas from the fake and who I could trust and who I can't and since I been in here, I had a lot of time to think about a lot of shhh because these streets ain't nothin' nice 'specially for a ninja like me because too many ninjas speak up on my name. And by them doing that it's only makin' problems for me and bringin' stress to my chest tryna stop me from doin' what I gotta do to make it through this life time without dyin' at a young age puttin' me through life time stress because her baby boy lost his life to these streets. Because one of these ninjas out here broke and they need some money so they tryna hate on the next ninja who got somethin'.

-Lil' Molly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that you can take control of your life before it takes control of you. What you do today will affect your tomorrow so be weary of your actions. What can you do to make yourself shine on the inside? The outside shine fades after a while. Keep having faith in God and you will go far.

A Bad Trip?

I remember I had a bad trip when I thought one of my homeboys was trying to get with my girlfriend and I hit him on his lip for no reason.

I remember I seen some guy have a bad trip in the street in front of my house. He had smoked a sherm stick and he was rapping to himself in the middle of the street for about 45 min. When I seen that, I, myself, or other people, have bad trips on drugs, I feel hurt inside because I feel that we either need someone in our life or we need help, but no one cares.

-Dennis, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Dennis, this must have been quite an experience to remember it so vividly. Your observation — that people who do too many drugs need help and feel no one cares about them — is very smart and very sad. We hope that you have, or will find, someone that listens to you. Have you looked? Sometimes we shut ourselves up and don't realize that we are missing opportunities. Don't give up hope; we're rooting for you.

The Beat Within

You Trippin' If You Don't Care

What's up Beat, this that lil' boy from those Hayward streets. Well today The Beat would like us to write about "I Don't Care." Well I didn't say that that's the subject — shhh I care about everything in my life. Even This Beat staff was crying when she was saying when people don't care that they will bang till they die or hustle till they die.

Well it's kinda funny 'cause I've been in intake, C-unit, and max control and mostly almost every "gangmember" I met they always say that oh I miss my family, I'm stupid an all these things and especially their girlfriends. Well I don't care what chu are. You're fakin' it — you ain't a banger just quit that shhh and live your life. Stop trying to be something who you ain't and if you a true banger then you're a savage 'cause they're the people that don't give a shhh, but I know mostly everyone does care. So stop saying you don't 'cause you're lying to yourself.

But as for me, I care! I care for my life, my girl, Brenda, that's pregnant, my family, and my Latin queen, my mom, so I don't know about y'all, but I care, so till next time, stay up and be safe.

Oh, and to Abbas and Lil' Gato, just be safe and don't let the system get to ya 'cause these people don't give a damn. To Lil' Jose, I'm going to Camp, and I hope your behind reads The Beat 'cause I just beat the court and now I'm going back to Camp! See you soon ! Thanks Beat.

-Lil' Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You right Chris just about everybody cares, sometimes what comes out of our mouths isn't what we really thinking or feeling, but those people say they don't care most likely care. You are saying that you care so handle yo' business at the Camp, so you can get out and support your lady and be there for your kid.

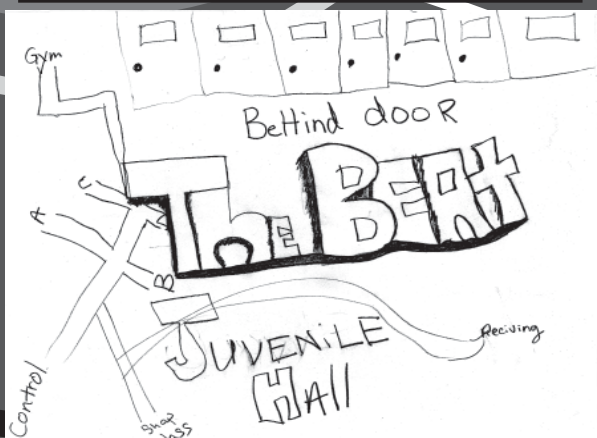
Believe — You Can Do It

I remember how I was surprised when I first learned how to dunk. It was a surprise, because I wasn't even trying. But it shocked me when I said I was going to dunk — and I did!

I always told my friends at school, "I'll never be tall enough to dunk." That day I dunked, it taught me that it's not how tall you are or how old you are — but what you believe you can do! All you have to do is put your mind to it and believe in yourself, in anything you want to do.

-Relldiggidy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is an inspiring story, on the real. But maybe the moral to the story is to just keep trying. 'Cause even when you don't believe, you just might surprise yourself — and do it!



Time

Sitting in my jail cell
Waiting for bail
Thought I had confidence
But got locked behind a fence
I was only sixteen
Got caught up in the game
Thought I was the same
No one to blame
But myself
At night in my cell
I talk to the devil
I can't find God
At night I cry
Dry tears run down my face
It is like unstoppable rain
Unbelievable pain
It ain't the game
It is the way you play it

-Brandon, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Brandon, you recognize that you are responsible for where you are today. Facing our own responsibility for painful consequences is difficult, but it is an important step towards change and we challenge you to give yourself kudos/props for doing it. How can taking responsibility become more empowering and less painful for you? One thing to remember, too, is that many factors influence your behavior, so take responsibility for your actions, but don't be so hard on yourself that you ignore what helped you push you onto this path. Figuring out how you got where you are now can help you figure out what you need to do and not do to build the life you want to live. What can you do to build your skills and talents and improve your odds for "winning" in life?

Thought I had confidence
But got locked behind a fence

Times In My Life

I'm sittin' in here doin' time away from my hustle and grind.
It's about time I stopped, but the block keeps calling me back.
I need my paper to be stacked so I could put food in my mouth
and clothes on my back.

It's hard to be black.

Especially when yo' mom is out breakin' her back,
Just to keep me warm at night.
That's why I had to sell that light.

But them days are over.

I've changed over from a heathen to one believin',

In the man above,

Hopin' he got love for a thug.

I'll be home soon getting out of this prison,

So I can listen,

To the sweet sound of my chicks voice.

I'm never going to get this time back,

But I know fo sho',

I ain't never going to come back to this place again.

-Daniel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you. We hope you never come back. Life is hard, if it's not one thing, it's another. You just have to have a positive attitude. Believe in yourself. You can accomplish whatever you want. We believe in you.

Big Samoa And Shady Boy's Page

Just A Note About Love

Love and hate can lead to heartbreak and pain.
If you hate for so long, it brings damage to the brain
and you'll eventually turn insane
from the hurting of the game.

It will break your heart.

Your heart is nothing but sorrow and tears,
reminiscing on your fears,
so you start to get high and drink Seagram's gin,
thinking that it is going to take care of your fears.

When you get in that zone,
you're ready to run and hide
'cause the feeling inside tells you to be alone,
but you can't do it alone;
you need someone to comfort your screams and moans,
but after the pain, you'll be ready to bloom,
so don't hide in your tomb,
but if you keep hating,
you will meet your doom 'cause haters die soon, like boom.

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love and hate is addictive, just like a drug. But trip, can love turn into hate, and can hate turn into love? Once you start loving, it's like an elevator drop, it feels good and weird, and people that be hating, it doesn't seem like they ever stop. How do you shake the hate and embrace the love?

**I wanna make good money
without any problems
with the police, and all
that kind of stuff.**

I Don't Care

I don't care
Gettin' kicked out of school
I don't care
Beatin' the shhh out of ninjas
I don't care
Police thinkin' I'm a menace
I don't care
Grown ups lookin' down at me
I don't care
About gettin' money the easy way
I don't care
That I'm not allowed some places
I don't care

But maybe I spend so much time not caring
Then maybe... it is caring?

Shhh

I don't care.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Was there a time in your life when you cared about school and about what other people thought about you? Did something happen in your life to make you stop caring? Do you think that you will start caring? What would make you care?

Just Another Note About Love

Love is the first thing that comes to mind,
so love will be the subject of this rhyme.

Love from a friend, love from a parent,
love from a person, help with some stuff,
enter the life of the pimp,
and the whore enter the life of a body.

Behind a door, I see past a smile

and see past a face,

an inch past the eye, and an inch past the skin,
and deeper and deeper.

I search within for the truth.

You can't notice love too soon.

Just don't notice love too late

'cause I thought love was fake,

but now I sit up all night,
and do nothing but shiver and shake.

How I never think love is fake,

and I take my time to pray,

and take this time to say

I love and need you to love me for my sake.

-Shady Boy's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You gotta give love to receive love. And if you had it and you lost it, you'll find it again. Who is this poem dedicated to?

Boom! Boom! Boom! Surprise!

Shhh, I didn't think I was capable of getting caught. I thought shhh me and my lil' bra never going to get caught up by the pigs. We done so much shhh that our minds got eluded and our egos stepped up... until one day I got caught slippin'. Surprise!

It all went down like this. To start it off, one of my potnas (actually used to be potna) shot me two tall cans of that 211. A couple of blunts got put in the air so my mind wasn't focused one hundred percent. And that's what gets ninjas caught up. Anyways I did some dirt went home thinking it's all good.

Three forty-five in the morning, "boom, boom, boom." It's the cops. So it was like a surprise gift you really don't want, but shhh happens and now I'm sitting in max unit in Alameda Juvenile Hall.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we all end up in messed up situations when we are under the influence. We hope that you have learned something from this experience — like not taking your freedom for granted. How can you make sure that you don't put yourself in the same predicament again?

I Do Care

I care about my education. I gotta finish school and get a good job. I wanna make good money without any problems with the police, and all that kind of stuff. I care about getting out. I really want to go home, but I just found out that I cannot go home. I have to go out of home.

-Johnny B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're sorry you can't go home. What could you do while at the placement to get you ready for all the things that you want to do in the future? Why do you think you want to get a good education and job, and to stay out of trouble, while so many of your peers have such very different goals in mind?

Imay's Page

Having A Kid

I'm a kid having a kid
But
I know what I did
I know the difference
Between milk and glue
I can't say that I didn't know
Done heard it all my life
How not to have sex
'Till I'm someone's wife
Well hell
I've been a sex toy
Since I was three
They had their turn
Now it's time for me
Giving up is a choice that I choose
Not to make
I didn't end my life
I just made a mistake
When I get back up
I know it's a different race
But I'm a grown-up child
And I'm going to take it
Face to face.

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay, you're right, you're just a kid, but, you're growing up. You learn from your life experiences. No one makes the jump from adolescence to adulthood overnight. You sound like you've empowered yourself with your decisions. And we have confidence in you. You will be a great mom. We all have a lot to learn, we've all been kids at one point in our life. Take what you've learned growing up, and teach your child. Now is the time to start making adult decisions.

Tango With the Devil/ Born Into the Fire

You danced with the Devil
And came out with me
He's haunted my life since the age of three
Telling me he loved me
But in his mind wishing I would die
How was there even a chance
Being born in the fire
My heart stops beating as I cry myself to sleep
He may win the fight
But I am the victory
Behind that smile on his face
Is a menacing snarl
We can forget where we come from
But never who we are
Born into the fire
With my whole world torn apart
We can forget where we come from
But never who we are

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay, this piece is really intense. Where is this coming from? Who is this addressed to? We cannot forget who we are, but we can change. Don't you think? We can't change what we've done, but we have control over what we will do. When you have control over your actions, then you are victorious.

Dear Beat Within Readers

Saturday, my dad and I fell out again for the last time. I'm trying to stay strong 'cause I can't let him win, but it's hard to know you are alone indefinitely in the times, you need someone the most.

I read a book today where a girl finds out who her father was, a man she saw everyday when she was fourteen. The same time I did, the same way. He told her he loved her and showed her support, and saved her from danger. Even before she knew she was of him. To top it all off, a guy that she had a crush on who had all the pieces together, and his life mapped-out, told her that he wanted to be her man.

When I finished the book, tears forced their way out of my eyes. Every day I realize that I've been going further and further down the wrong road, the wrong way. Now it's too late to change what happened and I'm so confused. I was looking for love in all the wrong places. Places, where it ain't never been and wasn't there. When I had to do it, I wasn't there when I chose to do it, and it ain't there now.

My mind races constantly on how I'm going to make things right for a child that still has a chance, but I won't let him win.

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay, reading stories that we can relate to, like the one you've just read really help us put our own lives in to a new perspective. If you focus on your love for your child, that will take you down the right road.

What Do You Tell Your Child?

What do you tell your child,
When they are looking for their dad?
You try to make him stay,
But he's the craziest the world has,
Ain't got a job or a decent place to stay,
Got caught up playin' here,
Tryin' to help him find his way,
He really didn't care, just rode you like a dog,
Lookin' from the sidelines, hopin' that you'd fall,
Got tired of beating you down
To only see you get strong
What do you tell your child when they feel like they're alone?
How do you let them know that sometimes
Ones add up to two
I'm a single mom tryin' to find out what to do.

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay, no one is a perfect mom. You'll handle each situation as it comes. When your baby asks about his/her father, then you will have to let him/her know. Always be honest. If you were in their position, what would you expect from your mother? All you have is honesty and love. That is the foundation for a great relationship with your child, and the recipe for being a great mother.

To You

I tried to hold on to the dreams
That we had
But the longer we stayed away
I figured out they never last
I think about you still,
Before I lay my head down to sleep
And hope sometimes you're thinking of me
I do still love you, but situations are hard
Because I do love you
I think you're better where you are
I hope you meet a woman
Who you can love even greater than I
But know that I will love you
Until the day I die
You were my hero
Along with a limited few
But remember in the darkest nights
My thoughts are still of you.

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful poem! You must really love him to be able to wish him the love of another woman. It's really hard to love someone that you cannot be with. However, some of the sweetest parts of a relationship is it's memories.

Abbas' Page

After A Certain Age . . .

After a certain age, a human with some knowledge should know the difference between right and wrong. People do make some wrong decisions in life, but the hardest part is learning from your mistakes.

I really think it is wrong to sell drugs because you ruin your life and everyone you sell those drugs to. When a person commits a crime, the person knows it's wrong, but they still do the crime because they really don't care.

My morals come from my mom and my whole family. I think a crime is wrong all the time, no matter the circumstances.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have you ever done something you thought was wrong? How do you deal with yourself and your actions when you do? What do you think drives people to not care and do things that are morally wrong anyway? Are your morals now different in the Hall than the ones you had on the outs?

My morals come from my mom and my whole family.

Help With My Life

I need help with my life.

I need help with getting out.

I need help with staying focused.

I need help with becoming a real man.

I need help with educating my mind and soul.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do ever ask for help? What can you do to show the judge that you are ready for the real world? What do you need to do to become ready for freedom?

I Do Care Now

I used to say "I don't care" until I got locked up. I hate when people say they don't care about their life or anyone. Some people give up on their life when they're tired of trying, and stop trying.

I used to be like that, or when you try your best at something, and not succeed, so they just give up on life. Some people don't care about their future by continuing to get locked up. I totally care about my future because it's really important to me. I care more about my religion. My family has also become a lot more important.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Can you try and help those people that say they don't care through your religion? We all need help. Sometimes that's the way people are feeling at the moment and they do something careless and end up feeling like that for a long time for something they did when they felt hopeless. So now that you got your mind straight, you should try and help others around you realize what's really important.

My Fathers . . .

My father died when I was one year old. However, I've been blessed with a lot of father figures in my life.

My mother is probably the biggest from everyone else. My uncles and cousins also have a huge impact in my life. They set perfect examples of real men. I look up to them because I know that they're there for me whenever I need them, in any circumstance.

They are definitely a positive influence in my life. My role models have been there for me through thick and thin.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you show love to those people who have been positive role models in your life? Do you always listen to what these people have to say? Why or why not?

I Surprised Myself

I surprised myself a lot when I started writing for "The Beat Within." I never really knew I had a talent for writing and opening up so much. I was shocked with myself when I really got into the program and started looking toward to the program.

I was also surprised by how my incarceration has changed me so much and has made me realize that life isn't all about fun. I was also shocked by all the knowledge I gained from my incarceration.

Finally, what surprised me the most is how emotional I've become in here and how I'm not scared to share my thoughts with people and stand up for what I believe in.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We all learn something new about ourselves whenever we actually have the patience to notice it. Many people don't notice change in them, and to recognize that you changed in a positive way is real important. We're glad to see that you're learning and that you stand up for what you believe in, hopefully it's a worthy cause.

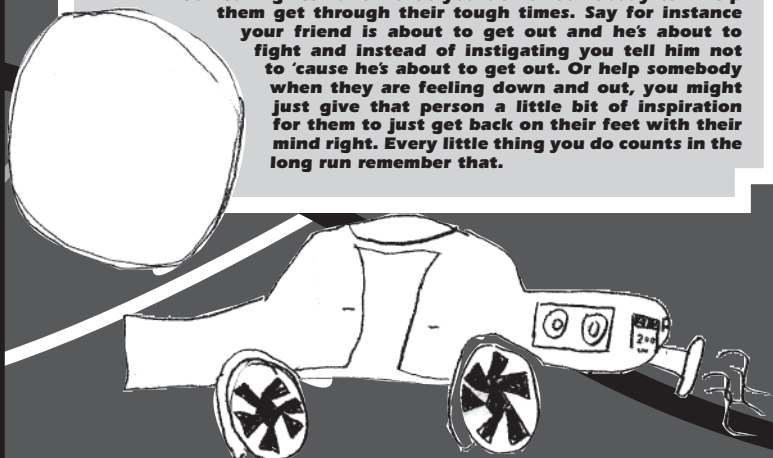
When I Was Born

The night of my life was when I was born because that's when I came into this world: for a purpose and hopefully to change people's lives.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have the power in your hands to change other people's lives. But it doesn't even have to be a drastic change.

Something real small that you do for somebody can help them get through their tough times. Say for instance your friend is about to get out and he's about to fight and instead of instigating you tell him not to 'cause he's about to get out. Or help somebody when they are feeling down and out, you might just give that person a little bit of inspiration for them to just get back on their feet with their mind right. Every little thing you do counts in the long run remember that.



Boog Money, Shannon And Lil' Gato's Page

I'm Losin'

I'm losin' the war 'cause I can't say what I want to say
I'm losin' the war 'cause I'm losin' faith each and every day
I'm losin' the war 'cause I'm locked away can't even wake
up to a bright sunny day

I'm losin' the war 'cause my faith is on the line being
locked up it's hard doing time
I'm losin' the war 'cause I'm beatin' myself up lookin' at
these walls it's hard to hold up
I'm losin' the war 'cause I can't compete lookin' down to
the ground with faith I don't see I'm losin',
but I want to compete.

RIP Ray Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You may be losing in some ways but you're a winner in other ways. You're a winner in The Beat. If you still have the drive to compete, then you'll be just fine. Just keep your drive alive. Don't allow the negative forces in your life to eat up your faith, hopes and dreams. How can you express yourself without "saying" what you have to say — hint, hint.

I Don't Care

Yes, I have heard someone say I don't care 'cause that was me. Before I got in here I was telling myself that I did not care about going to jail but when I got in here it gave me a different look at shhh... you don't want to be locked up, having some one tell you when you can use the restroom or how much you can eat or someone yelling at you that is not your parent.

And you can't say what you want but I know that no one wants to be locked up behind a door, and you can't say you don't care about not being able to see your family when you want or not being able to see your girlfriend when you want.

-Shannon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For real! What do you miss the most since you've been locked up? How do you plan on making the best out of your freedom when you are released? How will you make up for lost time with the family and lady? Would you be bold enough to say that incarceration did you some just?

No One Else To Blame

I'm constantly living the life I choose in my one-man cell. Wearing these county blues.

Why am I wearing this crap?

Caught up in this shhh when I thought I was undercover.

I was living my life in the fast lane, making my money, but the outcome of this shhh, being locked up, isn't funny.

So to all of you who think you know what you're doing, you better slow down before your life gets ruined.

Don't take this personal; I'm just spitting game. So don't end up like me in this one-man cell with no one else to blame.

-Lil' Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good flow, good message. If you were given the opportunity to get out tomorrow, what would you change about your life so you wouldn't have to spend time behind these walls again?

Faith

Faith goes along way
but it's how you carry out that faith
that speaks out today
Faith is a rejoicing sound
sometimes you lose it and feel lower than the ground
Faith is sometimes not believing
but when things start to happen
life gets more achieving
Faith makes the heart pump fast
but sometimes it doesn't even last
because of bad thoughts that you had
Faith is like Hennessey and coke
you love the feeling for a minute
and then you feel broke because you lost
The only thing close to faith is hope
Faith makes a soul jump and the body stronger
You began to think and then you know
you're nothing but a loner dying with faith
in this state of California.

RIP Ray-Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you keep the faith alive in such a pessimistic environment? When you feel that you're about to lose faith and hope, what pulls you back up to feeling strong again? How would you convince someone that they should have faith?

Surprise

A time that I was surprised with myself was when I would tell myself that I could not do good in school and I would constantly tell myself that but I was wrong 'cause it was a mind thing. I had told myself that and down graded myself but right before I got in here I had got a 2.97 and it was going higher. I had went from 0.38 and that was a big improvement and after seeing that — it made me more confident.

But I let the peer pressure get in the way and that is why I am in here now.

-Shannon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Getting good grades is something to really be proud of. As long as you keep trying your best you should be all right. When you are released, do you plan on going back to school and getting your diploma? Do you plan on going to college? Where do your interests lie?

How Can I Love It?

I ended up in this place by pressing my luck.
Wearing these county khakis and these county chucks
I can't wait till I'm out so I can get me some girls.
I guess I took for granted the beautiful things in this world
Now I'm sitting here in this county cell bored as hell.
I am a criminal according to the county jail.
Why me, is this my future?
The damn government has enough laws to fill a computer.
I think I'm fed up and I'm tired of it.
If my life is going to end by being locked up,
how can I love it?

-Lil' Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We bet you're tired of being locked, but complaining about the laws aren't going to change them. The best hope you have, and we're sure you already know this, is to change your behavior so the laws can't touch you.

Krrmnall And Anthony's Page

To Understand My Pain

To understand my pain will open a place for an answer,
feeling another's emotions.

To much or to little to bare?

What must we suffer for another, to understand another's rage?

Are we to shelter another's feeling and thoughts from the world
or face them as they have come.

Live for ones own glory or help each other achieve something greater
by understanding while standing on common ground.

We can only prevail with anothers understanding. "Live."

-Krrmnall, Virginia

From The Beat: There's an insight about redemptive communication here that's encouraging to us. The questions you ask suggest that you are open to the pain and loss of others—a quality called "empathy." The phrase "common ground" here is beautifully used.

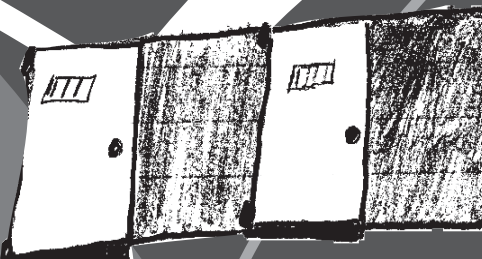
Within

Unfamiliar to the silence that encloses my mind I must reveal the cause of my pain. Unshown motivation drives for all the wrong reasons, determined to fail.

Give in to this urge or stand up to the challenge.
Shall you succeed?

-Krrmnall, Virginia

From The Beat: There is a kind of basic question posed here—one that you seem to be asking yourself, one that takes courage to ask. How can young people act constructively on the very crucial questions that they are forced, especially by circumstances, to ask themselves everyday?



Expressional

Love is something that you feel in your heart
But talking about it in your mind is where it starts
And you sometimes express it under the sheets after dark
Some people think when you feel it, you're a mark
But why care about what people think?

God gave us this feeling
For some people, it's the link
To stop hatred and killing
For me, it's happiness
For some, it's sexual
I never had this choice

My heart chose to be expressional

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good to express what you're feeling without worrying what other folks think. Don't let another other person call you a mark, just because you are being honest. Somebody who knows how to express his feelings without shame, now that's a real G right there.

Smile Again

(A poem to my mom from her first-born)

What's up, mom? I hope that you're doing good.
You didn't visit me this weekend, but it's understood
I know you work with other kids to feed
And it's hard to see your first son locked up every week
But I still think of you and miss you a lot
Saturday and Sunday, I thought about it and got hot
So mom, how has life been?
You know, I'm incarcerated, having a war I can't win
I can't wait,
But all I gotta do is think about the family you raised
and smile again.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem; send it to your mom. We bet she'll love it. Sometimes moms forget that their sons care about them or love them just like we as sons/daughters forget or think sometimes that our parents/guardians don't love us. Try to use your time productively while you're locked up, and that way it won't be wasted.

I don't care who writes me, as long as I get a letter.

I Don't Care

I don't care about this system, or the white man's laws. Sometimes, they lock us up without even having a just cause.

I don't care about this facility, or if it burns down.
I wish it would so I could hit the fence and head towards town.

I don't care about these walls, or even my cell.

I feel stupid every day just waiting for the mail.

I don't care who writes me, as long as I get a letter.

In here I realized to appreciate the little things from a rose petal to a feather.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have to care a lil' bit, because this system is controlling your life right now. Care enough so you can get the hell out of the system and then you can be the one calling the shots on your life. Right on for the on-topic piece!

Waking Up Surprised

Surprise!

As I open my eyes,

I'm stuck in this facility run by white guys.

I never thought this was my future or my path.

I got ten minutes to take a shower, not even a bath.

I wouldn't have to deal with this shhh if I were at home.

I would probably fixin' my car, polishing the chrome.

I can't wait until I'm out so I can live my life

And not have to deal with waking up surprised.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is just a flat tire on your road to your success, young homie. If you believe that you can be successful, then you can do it. It's all on where your mind is at. Be ambitious and go out and get yours, and get it legit so nobody can take it from you.

Fairness

I think the rich people that have pull in our community aren't being fair to us poor citizens.

Tax money should be used for helping out young adults that have drug problems and who are striving to make a change. But we can't because there aren't many people or programs that are willing to take us in and help us solve our problems and better ourselves. Whether it be gang bangers, drug addicts, or just people who are struggling with family problems.

So what I'm saying is we need more funds to support our young teens with these problems.

-Tonio, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: If we had our way, Tonio, our nation's resources would be used differently. No person who wanted and needed help would go without. But we do want to encourage you not to give up. There are good people in the world, and in your own community who will respond, to the best of their ability, to your request for assistance.



Why Does The Devil Keep On Messing With Me?

Why does the devil stay huntin' my soul
I wanna stay fresh to death like 'caine and hov
I hold steady and stay solid on this bumpy road,
But still, "the good die young" was what I was told.

"Don't get caught up in Lucifer's trap,"
my mother's words were bold,
But I still hit the turf and sold,
Hit licks and purchased gold.

I need money and to stay on my toes,
I got a habit to have the best of cars, females, and clothes.

Don't trip; I'm a man,
So I reap what I sow
And I sow what I reap.

I have visions the Devil wants my soul to keep.
I wanna change my life.
Yeah, it's easy to speak,
But every time I get out,

That thug life sweeps me right off of my feet,
But on the real, in this life, I don't wanna be,

So somebody tell me why the devil's steady messin' with me?

-Emmy-Boe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Temptation, that's what it is. You're gonna have temptations, they're a part of life. It's gonna be on you to see what is really worth it to you: Do you wanna keep risking your life for fast money? Have a strong mind and heart and try to fight those temptations. We think you know it's worth it. We truly appreciate you stepping up as a write and leader in the workshops.

Emmy-Boe And Tonio's Page

The Life I Live

Life growing up in the hood is tough, sometimes.
But this is the life our parents brought us up in.

Police itching for a catch,
searching for miles and miles
up and down our streets.

And all the homeboys stoned on a mission,
hittin' corners in our montes,
trying to survive, day by day in our struggle.

-Tonio, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a fine poem, Tonio. It gives us the feeling of being right there, with you. Nice writing.

The Streets Is My Father Figure

I'm gonna keep it real with y'all! I have a father, or whatever you would like to call it! My pops is an OG in the lifestyle I live. If you know me and my father, then you know he's a pimp, a hustler, and last but not least, a head buster, and that's on my bra, Lil' J!

I started out as a youngsta, disobedient, hardheaded and basically, a problem child. My father was in the penitentiary for the majority of my life, especially when I needed him the most. So when he wasn't around, it gave me time to be in the streets more, in my projects, where I was raised.

I looked up to the bigger ninjas in my neighborhood, and I wasn't alone! But anyway, I grew older and worse in the streets, puttin' in work and earning stripes for the turf! Gettin' money and stuntin'! You know what that thug life like.

-Emmy-Boe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you always want to live the thug life? Does this lifestyle come with a lot of struggle and strife? Do you think that you're on the same path as your dad? Or can you make it so that you don't make the same mistakes that he has?

**I started out
as a youngsta,
disobedient,
hardheaded
and basically,
a problem child**

"The Night Of My Life Was. . ."

Ecstasy Pill - The Night Of My Life

The night of my life was when I first took an ecstasy pill — the night I got robbed on the turf. The stunna I took put me back on my hustle tip.

I was up all night and didn't sleep until about four because I had this female givin' it up all night until I couldn't anymore. I had knocks callin' my celly and I was makin' money every two minutes makin' 40 drops, 25 drops and 20 drops. I was surprised that I had to make a 100 drop at 5:00 in the morning — that sold me out.

I was rollin' so hard I forgot I got robbed, but not really trippin' off it. The thing that scared me was my lil' potna got shot for some weak beef shhh and he didn't deserve to die that young. Even though we don't live right it doesn't mean we gotta leave this earth early. Peace and love. Rip Lil' Clarence, Lil' bro — wish you were here. Love...

-Lil' Bott

From The Beat: All this happened in one night? Sex, drugs, being robbed, death? When you woke up the next morning, how did you feel? What has changed for you since Clarence's death? What next? Hopefully help.

Worst Night Of My Life

The worst night of my life, I got locked up with the female that I love and my cousin. We all went to jail that night.

That night I felt angry and mad at myself and I knew it was my fault that me and my loved ones got arrested.

I couldn't get in contact with my family for about two months and the judge thought I didn't have no family, but at the last minute I got in touch with my family. I felt mad at myself when I saw my family.

-Danny Boy

From The Beat: You should find a way to turn your anger towards yourself into determination on getting out and staying out for your loved ones. You can't turn back the hands of time and please don't live in the past, plan ahead, make goals and achieve them. What will be your first step?

Release From the Hall

The night of my life was when on May twenty-seventh of this year, they released me from the Hall and sent me to a group home in Stockton.

I spent one month and two days in the group home, but I decided to go to another group home because I was messing up at the first one. Now on June twenty-ninth, I came back here — because I'm going to go to another group home.

I hope I go tomorrow to the group home, or even somewhere else — because I don't want to be in the Hall!

-Victor

From The Beat: We hope if you're reading this, it's because someone got a copy to you somehow at your group home. Just be cool now and don't mess up, so you won't see the Hall.

My First Time Out the Hall

The night of my life, was when I got out of the Hall my first time. I was hella happy. First thing I did, was go see my lady, 'cause that's the way I am.

Then I went to kick it with the homies and soaked them. I was happy 'cause I had been with my lady and spent time with the carnalses.

And that was the night of my life when I got out of the Hall. Alratos, take care.

-Giggles

From The Beat: Every night can be the night of your life, if you can learn how to live free responsibly and stay out of the Hall.

The Best Is Yet To Be

The best night of my life, will be when I'm married with kids — living healthy, at home, talking to my kids until they fall asleep, with my wife in bed waiting for me to come lay down and go to sleep.

Yes, but first we'll listen to slow jams, thinking about when we first met and how we met, talking about how we first met each other's parents and what we plan to do for our kids when we graduate.

-Relldiggidy

From The Beat: If you don't already have a child, don't wish yourself a parent before you've graduated and got that steady-paying job. But if you're just about to be a parent or you already are a father— then, yes, live healthy for the sake of your loved ones! Be there and be square, to show them how much you care!

This One Night

Q-vole homeboys and homegirls. This is Young Lazy from Newark and I'mma 'bout to write about the night of my life so respect it, and pay attention. When I was at Camp, every home pass was crackin' in my part of town but there was this one night that I'll never forget.

Well me and my homies was posted up by the tracks soakin' 'em waitin' for my other homie to get off work 'cause one of his square patnas that does clean tattoos was s'posta to hook it up. Well we cut from the tracks and went to the Taco Stand in central Fremont to see if we could run into some enemies but we didn't so we cut to my pad.

Well dude flaked so we said forget it and we was gonna shake until my pops was trying to get a bbq started so the homies hit a meat run, carne asada, chicken, ribs, and we got it started and hella homies started coming through in packs with packs of brew.

It was crackin' like a 40 over your head — real hard. I was pervin' and it was only like 9:00. Then some females/homegirls came through and we copped some more brew and some Henny. By then I was gone with da wind! But I wasn't with the homies for half of the night!

I was in my room and then my mom's room for half the time taking care of something or someone. The homies was like where's Lazy? I haven't seen him all day and this is his party! Well females was hittin' lines and actin' 'a foo', homies was yackin' and fallin' all over the place. This female got her cell phone stolen and started a fat ass scene so I kicked her out and told her to go home.

By the end of the night my homeboys and one of their cousins needed a ride home so I stole my dad's truck and my homeboys rode out with me to drop 'em off.

After all that one of my homies was too drunk to go home so he crashed at my pad and we was hella drunk eating hella pizza and still drinkin' and laughing about some dumb stuff and he finally passed out and I was talking on the phone and he started talkin' in his sleep yellin' at somebody.

-Young Lazy

From The Beat: That night sounded rowdy as hell! If you could turn back the hands of time, what moment of the night would you replay? Have you ever had a good time without being wasted? Can you have a good time without alcohol? Why or why not? When did you start drinking and when will you stop drinking?

The night of my life was...

When I was posted on the block, getting' money until this lady that I help out gave me up and told the people we are selling drugs out of her house. We put food in there, put money in her pocket, gave her son money too.

-George

From The Beat: Hmm that was the night of your life? What do you mean by that? How do you feel about this lady now? Why do you think she told people you were selling drugs? Were you lying to her? Taking advantage of her? What do you make of this situation? Did you learn anything from it? We want to know more

The best night of my life, will be when I'm married with kids

The Night Of My Life Was...

When I spent the whole day with my girl doing what we do. And to top it all off we had a house to ourselves to do what we wanted...wink, wink.

I love you a lot my love Melissa

-Ashton-Adogg

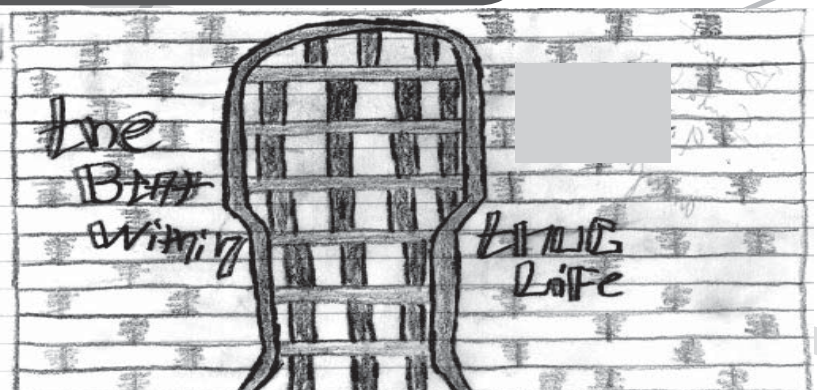
From The Beat: We think we know what the "wink, wink" is all about. Sounds like a great day. The sweetest moments in life are spent with loved ones. Don't worry, there's plenty more to come. Lie has many great things to offer. Be patient.

The Best Night

when i stayed up all night lighting firecrackers it was the best night

-Victor

From The Beat: A vision of freedom and independence!



"The Night Of My Life Was. . ."

The Best Night Ever

The night of my life was when I was out on the streets with my girl and my homeboys and their girls. We was at a party, and the party was crankin' so hard that we took the girls back to the house, and went back to the party.

We hooked up with some more girls, dranked and smoked. I mean that night I would never forget it because that was the only night I would have started to live the life as a thug even though I was only twelve.

I am seventeen now, and I am still a thug but that night was the best night ever because it was the beginning of a "Thug life" even though I am paying for it now with being in here and not being there for my son or my family. But anyways, as I look back, that night was the best night ever in my life.

-Taze

From The Beat: Taze, we feel ya', but come on now, that was a great night 'cause of drugs and females. Is that what you mean when you talk about living the "Thug Life"? As it turns out, the life of a thug ain't all good. It's those little moments that you can enjoy. But, is it worth it? Suffering the consequences of this lifestyle, for the short moments? What is your life worth to you? What is important to you? These are the decisions you have to make, not only for yourself, but for you son as well. Wake up!

Tonight Is The Night

The night of my life was when me and a bunch of my potnas were out chillin' on the block and one of my potnas came out of the cuts and said that someone had jumped him and he knew where they were.

So we went over to where they were and they was having a party so we said screw that shhh and we went inside at they was drinkin' and smokin' so one of my potnas just starts to beat up someone at the party. After he beat his ass we found out that he wasn't the one who hit my homie.

So instead of asking around we just decided to take all their alcohol and some of their weed and they didn't even hesitate on giving us all they stuff. Afterwards we had our own little party and that was the night when we had fun.

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: Do you think that you got your revenge? How did that make you feel? Did your friend feel better after you all got revenge? Did revenge make you feel better or just a little emptier?



The Night Of My Life Was

The night of my life was the night on Halloween when I was kickin' it with homeboys from Newark, and Hayward and Fremont. We was all havin' a good time soaking down on some beer you know.

I remember going to a hotel to pick up some home girls with a stolo, because they got kicked out 'cause they was smashin' hoording on the party. Damn homeboys, we was all pervin', like damn.

Then we seen a homeboys running through the field yelling out their varrios and hella laughin', and then we heard hella placa in a high speed down the road.

Then we went to Hayward for a party but when we got there it was dead so we had our own party, homeboys yellin' out their 'hoods, homeboys were throwing bottles, homeboys just spinnin' them!!

Then placa came and some homeboys and myself got arrested. Then my moms came and got me. But it was a coo' night

-Young Negro

From The Beat: Sound like you're chasing an adrenaline high! We hope you don't spend the rest of your life chasing highs. Do you see yourself having a good time without having to use alcohol? If you can't have a good time without alcohol or drugs, please seek help as soon as possible or the end of the road will be ugly or possibly a dead end.

The Night Of My Life Part II

What's up Beat? This is the homie Green Eyes from Hayward about to write a little something — so check it out. Well, I was on a home pass from Camp and one homie hit me up because we was gonna go soakin' 'em at the tracks in Newark with some other homies and then get some tats.

So we was on the tracks soakin' on some "Old English" and "Mickey's." After that we went to a taco stand downtown to see if we could run into some rivals. After we were done eating — we cut to my homies house to get tatted up but dude faked so we was just posting and my friends dad was like "Let's g it up" so we was like fo' sho. So hella homies came through and we hit up some females and we went and got hella drank.

When we came back the females was there so we was getting hella drunk actin' a fool then my homie cut up to his room with some female. After awhile he came out and everyone started to come into the house. Then some females went into the bathroom and started to pull the homie in. After that he was in the bathroom with one of the females and she started talking about she wanted me so I went in the bathroom and you know!

But other then that it was crackin'.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: You should really be careful about who you have sex with. You never know where people have been and you certainly don't know where your homeboys have been. Plus, if a girl is drunk and you have sex with her — that is rape because you are taking advantage of someone under the influence. We just want you to be coo' and be smart about your shhh. Be weary of warts in odd places.

The night of my life was when my baby brother was born

The Night Of My Life

The night of my life was when my bro' and me were posted at the store in the 'hood. I was gettin' off some rocks and some rivals pulled up, and you know we had to smash on 'em. It was just my bro and me, so he got off and I'm runnin' through dude's pockets. I jumped in his car and smashed to other liquor stores in my 'hood. We got some drank and smashed to the spot at the park.

There was hella homies out posted up. It was only like 7:00 and the sun was going down. It was one of the homies birthday, so they were like, "Meet us at the club." We're like, "Alright Let's go!" But, we ain't got no ID, so when we got there, we couldn't get in, so we were like 30 deep.

We checked everybody that we didn't know and jumped on people. Someone had called the police. Then, my bro', my cousin, and me, jumped in the car and got on high-speed. Yeah, we got away that night, but little did we know that the police was already on us, investigating hecka stuff that was goin' down, so they tried to link us with stuff I don't know about.

I was at Camp and picked up on new charges, but I'm going to beat this case and pimp the program back at Camp, if they give me another chance.

-Young Dru

From The Beat: We hope that you make the best of your program and learn as much as you can. What kind of skills can you learn in Camp so that you can have something new under your belt on the outs? Just get out the system and don't keep going to other institutions, so you can be free and then you can talk like you pimpin' something. Try pimpin' your freedom legitly!

OCTOBER 6, 2000

The night of my life was when my baby brother was born. It was October 6, 2000. He was eight pounds and 12 oz. My mom was in labor for hours and it looked very nasty, but after it was all done, I had a very handsome baby brother named Masia Maleek H. that is now very smart. He's three years old.

-Raven

From The Beat: Life is a beautiful blessing. We hope you and your baby brother continue to share life's wonderful moments.

I'm going to beat this case and pimp the program back at Camp

"The Night Of My Life Was. . ."

My Many Valentines

The night of my life was on Valentine's Day up a my people house. I called my girl earlier in the day to come up there where I was at. That was in the daytime when I called her. So all through the day I was just kicking it with my patnas.

First we went to my patna's girl house. Her friend was trying to talk to me asking what I'm going to do for Valentine's. I just said I'll call her later on. But I did not think I would have to call because of my girl.

After that we went to the ball court. It was hella girls there. Well, what happened was all the girls that was asking what I was doing I kicked it with. And later my girl came. So in all, I kicked it with four girls in one day, and still got what I wanted which was my main girl.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: We've always believed that having more than one girl at a time is a prescription for trouble. Did you get in any? Did your girl know about the other three? What would she have done if she had found out? What would you have done if you found out your main girl had kicked it with three boys before she kicked it with you?

What A Night!

The night of my life is when I stayed out with my brother and friends just smoking, drankin' and poppin' pills, sometimes just kicking, staying out late. I never had a curfew, but I was always annoyed with tha boys hitting the block because I was on tha run from my group home. I was selling drugs on tha streets, so I had to look in front, behind, and to tha side to make sure the boys wasn't around.

The night of my life was when my patna got stopped and I was with him. We both was hella dirty. No, not what you're thinking, you know, like with dope on us an' shhh.

But anyways, my patna was telling me like, "Man I got warrants. I'm 'bout to go down." I was like, "Me too," but I had an alias name fo' me, so I said, "Stop trippin'."

Then the police was like, "What are y'all doing out this late?" So I think fast and said we are coming from a party. Then the police said, "Do y'all need a ride," and we both said, "Naw, we just live right down tha street."

So he got that bright ass light out of our faces, got in his car and got further off. Then we just stayed out getting our paper. But that was tha night of my life 'cause I thought we was gone go down for having drugs, warrants etc. We was kind of annoyed fo' the rest of the early morning. But that was definitely the night of my life. I can't speak fo' my ninja, but I know fo' sure that that was our lucky night.

-Zoomungus B5

From The Beat: Don't you think it's interesting that the night of your life was special for what didn't happen, and not for what did happen? (And don't we think it's interesting that even though you got lucky, you didn't take the hint, because here you are...) What do you think the night of your life would be like if you were describing some wonderful things you got to do?

Family Night

The best night of my life was last year when my family and me were watchin' all kinds of movies. We were watchin' "Friday," "Friday After Next," and "Next Friday." Then, we watched "Belly," "Cradle 2 To The Grave," and "Romeo Must Die." My favorite part was just being with my family and just being relaxed. We had fun that night.

-Xavier B1

From The Beat: How do you remember all those movie's names? It sounds like you spent a nice family night together. Would you like this to happen more? Out of all those movies, which one is your favorite?

First Kiss

The night of my life was when I had my first kiss. That was fun, but at the same time, I know that I sound like a lil' kid 'bout that. True, like just like when you go on your first date. You go out and eat at a place.

This is for my girl. She knows that I love her, but I can't tell her myself. If I had a chance to tell her that I love her, I would. Some people don't know how does it feel like to be in here. I love her so much.

-Rick B1

From The Beat: We think the memory of a first kiss is a sweet one, and not at all like a lil' kid. Love can give us reasons to live, to achieve good things in life, and to be better than we are. (It can also be pain...) When you get back out to her, what is going to keep you together — and out of here?

Here's To The New Year

The night of my life was New Year's Eve when we smoked trees and drunk wine. My girl and me made out. I think that was the best night of my life.

-De'Aries B1

From The Beat: We hope you have a lot more nights like this. But first you've got to get out of here — and stay out of here!

**I thought of my family
 and how much I
 already missed them.
 I thought of my self
 stayin' in here for
 some months and just
 missin' life.**

Juvenile

The night of my life was the first night I spent in Juvenile Hall. I couldn't even sleep. All I did was think about all the reasons and things I did for this. I thought of my family and how much I already missed them. I thought of myself stayin' in here for some months and just missin' life.

I feel like every night of my life since May 12, 2004, has been the shadiest time in my life. Hope to God that I get out July 13, 2004, in two weeks. Amen.

-Gabriel

From The Beat: We feel this prayer, Gabriel. When you thought about all the reasons and things that led you here, did you make any decisions about changes you want to make in your life so you're not in this situation again, missing your family and stressing?

Dreaming

The night of my life is when I'm in a stretch Navigator limo, with the wifey, off an ecstasy pill cruising the streets, going to the beach, watching the water crash against the sand as we lay down.

My plan is to take her to a level she never reached. Then I get more pissy drunk and take her to my mansion, and we hop in the Jacuzzi. The water and bubbles splash against her body, and I'm on her side taking it nice and slow.

That's my fantasy and the way I want my nigh life to go.

-Jaydah B4

From The Beat: Fantasy is the right word for this piece. When you step back into reality, maybe you should concentrate on getting yourself out of here and doing what it takes not to come back. Or, perhaps you prefer the dream to reality.

My Night

The night of my life? The dinner dance in 8th grade. It was special, my daddy was crying to see his little girl growing up.

I had a blast that night. I danced 'till my heels feel off. I enjoyed myself and felt like an elegant young lady.

-Shavaliar GU

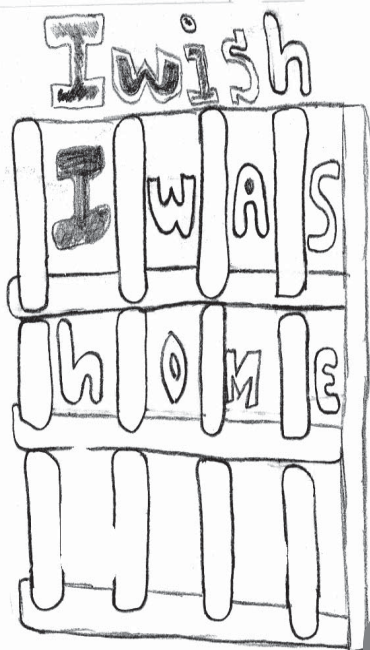
From The Beat: Sounds fabulous. We wish we'd have been there to enjoy it with you.

Night With My Boyfriend

The night of my life was the night I spent with my boyfriend, Marcus, before I went to Juvenile Hall. It's because on that night I felt like everything that we did together would never be interrupted by anyone.

-Christine GU

From The Beat: This is an intriguing piece, Christine. Why did you feel like you would never be interrupted that night? Can you not usually count on that?



"Surprise!"

Surprise!

I was surprised when I had a 3.33 (grade point average) on my report card because that was my highest through the whole high school year and I always be getting all F's 'cause I never went to class. I had about four A's and didn't cut any classes and it was because I was on probation.

-Guack Guack

From The Beat: It's great that you have been getting good grades. Knowledge is power and you seem to be one powerful dude, handling your probation. When you are released, do you think that you will continue to achieve high grades in school while on probation? Then once you are off, will you continue on the right path or will you slip? Why would you slip?

The Bad Gun Trip

One thing I did that I thought I was not capable of was getting locked up for a five-felony gun case. I got locked up on the 16th of May and I am hoping to get released on this Thursday the 1st of July. I got detained the three times, I went to court but I also got four felonies dropped between that period of time.

I am just sitting down in my cheap ass bed 24-7 thinking about if I am going to get released or if the DA is trying to do me for one little felony — just discharging a fire arm in public. I don't really know what is going to happen on the 1st of July but I am praying for the best.

I am guessing that I am going to get a release but if the DA doesn't feel satisfied that they might let me out with some kind of probation release — they might try to send me to Camp or try to give me half of my max — fifteen months. All I can do until July 1st is pray for the best.

-Hally

From The Beat: With a gun case, you are very lucky you are getting a second chance. As you know it could be a whole lot worse. Do you have any interest in living your life different? Meaning, making some touch changes. Wake up!

Surprise

A couple of months ago my mom went down for involuntary manslaughter. It was accidental. That was a big surprise because my mom has never been to jail.

She wrote me and said she was so scared at the time. Everybody in the family was shocked, but luckily she didn't get life or anything — just about a year.

-Reggie

From The Beat: We hope your mother is doing okay. How have you been doing without her? Do you still live your life the way you would if she was still around?

Surprise

A time when I achieved more than I thought I could, was when I was first put on probation, and I was also on E-M.

I started going to Dewey (school). In the past, I always cut class and even dropped-out for a while my sophomore year. I'm proud of myself now because while I was going there, I was on the honor roll for the first time and I was getting higher than 3.0 (grade point average).

The second time I was on E-M, I did better. I woke-up every single morning at 7am and made it to school on time. And I didn't do that a lot in the past, so that surprised me that I was becoming a little more responsible.

-Lil' Gina

From The Beat: It's nice when you surprise yourself, especially when it's doing something positive. You should be proud of yourself.

Surprises: Now I Know

I was with this girl that grew up with me for a long time, and I didn't think I was capable of going out with her — but now I know better.

I told people I'd never come to jail, but I was wrong. Now I know you should never tell somebody something that you know you are going to sometimes do even if it is the wrong thing.

I didn't think I could stand up to a kid in my 'hood, but I did. And he hit me in the face! I hit him back, then told him how I felt — and he left me alone.

All of these surprises tell me something about myself. Now I know that I should go to school and stay out of the street — or you will go somewhere you don't want to go.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We hope that you also learned you can do more than you thought you were capable of doing. If you make up your mind that you are not going to do those same old things you know are wrong and you know will bring you to the Hall again — you can succeed beyond your wildest dream.

ago my mom
went down for
involuntary
manslaughter

School Surprise

I thought that I was going to fail the sixth grade and I just tried harder the second semester. I made it to the seventh grade and now I'm on my way to the eighth.

-Raven

From The Beat: Good for you Raven! The harder you try, the further you go. How far will you go?

Surprise

There was a time when I ran a flat coming back from San Francisco and ended up in Redwood City stranded by myself at 12:00am.

I tried to fix it myself, but when I was screwing off my lugs the struts broke so I was on three tires and an axle. It was about 2:30am and finally someone came to my aid and he let me use his cell phone.

At about 3:30am, I got a hold of my friend and he picked me up. We fixed my car the next day, but the point is I thought I'd never fix my car that night.

-Ashton-Adogg

From The Beat: Ashton-Adogg, that just goes to show, with patience everything seems to work out. When people become impatient, situations get worse. Hopefully you take this lesson with you throughout life, it's a good one!

Surprise

I would say, I surprise myself all the time because I have a bad temper and when I can hold my anger, instead of talking back or beating them up, I start to sing, or walk away.

At times I think of a loved one. I surprise myself when I change my looks or hairstyle, doing sports, or something that's different that I don't do all the time.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Wow! That's really impressive. It takes a strong person to be able to control your emotions. These are some good ways. Thanks for sharing the wisdom!



Happy
Birthday,
Donna!

Three From Clarence

(1)
i was surprised
when i was riding
my bike and
did a three sixty
then i fell

(2)
i didn't care when
they brought me to juvenile
because i was mad
and i wanted to beat
the tar out of him

(3)
the night of my life
was when i went to this
party and went dumb

-Clarence

From The Beat: "Going dumb" seems fun, but staying free has to be number one. So don't get mad, get right. Do that three sixty — in real life!

"I Don't Care"

That Phrase

Yeah, I heard the phrase, "I don't care." I use that phrase, too, because it's certain things you try to do but can't accomplish, and you get frustrated and irritated!

And you get to the point that you don't care. Like when I want some chicken and I can't get none because I'm locked up in this motha...— oh, it's gon' be some trouble! 'Cause I'm a thug, you know? But yeah, I do care ... about my life. Psych!

-Poppa-ditty-pop

From The Beat: Not getting what you want when you want it and then going dumb off that, doesn't show you care about your life. It just enslaves you to trouble — and its consequences! Slow your roll, get some self-control, or keep paying the toll.

The Road to Tomorrow

i don't care about my past
'cause i know i can't go back
to redo what i have done
so i just try to stay strong
between the road of right and wrong
you feel me

-Lil' Will

From The Beat: The more you stay on the road of right, the easier it gets. It becomes a habit, so you don't have to stress when you hit the corner of right and wrong. Stay strong.

Don't Care

Sometimes people don't care because they be mad at something. And when you're mad at something you just don't care. Nothing matters to you because it doesn't cross your mind.

Sometimes we think it's too late for anything and things can't get better. Later when people start thinking about it they will start caring. Unless they some nuts. They ain't never gonna give a damn.

-Lil' John

From The Beat: When you are mad, do your emotions possess you or control you? How can you not allow your anger to take over your sensibility?

Why Care?

Why care about something, when you already been up in here four months and you have two more months to go. Then after that, you have an eighteen month program in Nevada at some shhh called R.O.P. (rite of passage).

See me, I'm up in here sick. So I don't really care about nothing right no at this moment because eighteen month is just the minimum so when I feel a little better I'll probably write, you feel me,

-Lil' Gb

From The Beat: We hope you feel better real soon. Sounds like your time in the hall and your program will be around three years total. It seems like hella time now, but you got your whole life ahead of you. You're still young. If you play your cards right, you've got at least a good sixty to seventy years left. Make your choices now, based on where you want to be the rest of your life. Doesn't that make sense?

You Care More Than You Can Say

What I have noticed in the past and in the present, is that when most people say "I don't care," it usually means that you care more than you can really say.

Most people just say "I don't care" as a way to not get into an argument or not to express their true feelings about the situation. That's just the way I see it.

-Crazy

From The Beat: Too many begin to believe the lie, and when they get out, they don't even try to change what puts them in pain.

I Didn't Care

There been a time I didn't care.

I didn't listen to nobody, not even my parents. I don't know why I didn't care at the time but now I do.

I should have listened.

I would not be here right now.

But I am, for not listening.

-Mean

From The Beat: Has this experience taught you anything? Are you gonna start listening now? What do you think will be the difference?

On Probation...

When I was on probation I started to care about hella stuff. I stopped smoking and drinking but once my PO said I was off — I started to not care and started smoking and drinking all day and 'cause of that, I'm back in Juvie.

-Quack Quack

From The Beat: Do you think that you needed to be on probation to have some kind of discipline in your life? Can you teach yourself self-discipline?

smoking and drinking all day and 'cause of that, I'm back in Juvie.

I Won't Care

i don't care about you or who you with
i smoke a lot of weed but i don't care
i had sex with my homeboy's mom
and with his sister but i don't care
i have sex with runners but i don't care
and if an old woman do what feels good to me
you know what — i don't care
if you don't like it i just won't like you
if it kills you i just won't care

-Kevin

From The Beat: You say in your other piece you want to go to school and stay off the street, so you won't end up in places like this. But it you keep the street and its uncaring selfishness strong in your mind and heart, you're bound to see more trouble start.

**i don't
care about
you or who
you with**

I Didn't Care

I never cared about making something of myself because I made money my way. I didn't care if I lived another day. I didn't care if I made my mother suffer. I didn't care if I hurt others or even if I took lives — I just didn't give a shhh. I didn't care if other gang members wanted or want my head.

I never cared till all my close homies started to get killed and started to go to the pens. Then I saw their families suffering and it made me care about my loved ones and what made me care more was my old G Homie and my mother they showed me love and compassion. And I realized — people do care, then I cared!

-Quince

From The Beat: We hope that you will always care and always have someone to care about. "He who has nothing — believes everything." Don't fall into that trap. Do you show your mother and your friends love and compassion in return?

Once Upon A Time I Didn't Care

I remember I said I didn't care about school because it wasn't helping me and I wasn't learning anything but that was a long time ago.

Now I know school is very important because if you don't go to school you can't go to college or get a good job that pays well!

-Reggie

From The Beat: We hope that you will further your education as far as possible and obtain your dream job. Where do you see yourself in five years and where do your interests lie?

Just Don't Give A What

What is wit' The Beat today? Can you see these people don't care no more? I see my boys everyday and they don't give a shhh. Believe ninjas come in here for lil' petty things. Some ninjas come in here for big thangs.

These square asses playin' they selves just comin' in here stupid stuff. You know what I just want my black people to get out of the Hall man. It's sad to see yo' own people in jail. You could do yo' thang just find a better way to get money I would tell you, but we in The Beat. But I'll tell ya. We do it like this first you get a female, get a key of some coke, get an apartment — do not move in just put boxes of money in and if you get one room filled — you have 100 mill. You get yo' shhh and get the hell out of Oakland or wherever you from. For all my people, get yo' money man.

-Jb

From The Beat: Making money from a female or using a female to hold your money makes you weak. A real man handles his own hustle. You have pipe dreams of having a room filled with a 100 million dollars. Wake up and smell reality! Get a legit job so you don't spend the rest of your life in jail when you haven't even hit ten thousand.

I Care About My Son

I been in here for seven months, waiting to go to ROP, and I don't think I'm going to leave anytime soon.

The only thing I care about is my son. If I didn't have him I would think about shhh. Would you care if you been in here for seven months and you don't know when you are going to leave and do eighteen months minimum, and your son's B-day just came and you didn't get to see him?

Why care? Remember this, your girl don't love you, she just using ya'.

-Lil' Rell

From The Beat: Lil' Rell, caring about your son, is a nice thing to care about. You sound like you've had a bad experience with your girl, but you've got something special, a son. Focus on that, be patient and you'll get through this. When you make your decisions, keep your son in mind and everything will fall into place. We wish you and your son the best. Just remember, patience will eventually take you where you wanna be, it's only time. Keep your head up!

Why We Don't Care

Some people don't care about things and they know they should care about it.

In my life and what I've been through, has a lot to do with not caring. I did a lot of things with my big bro Dre that we didn't care about after we were done doing them.

But when I look in my past I do see that we had to do what we had to do. But with all the things we did I really am happy that we didn't care. Because once you start to care that's when you get caught up. And that's why they got my big brother in max.

We want to care, but the system stops us from caring. Because the system is so crooked they force us to stop caring.

To my big bro in max. Stay up and write me.
(See you at camp).

-Lil' Samoa

From The Beat: Lil' Samoa, what is it that you don't care about? Not caring is not the answer, you just need to decide what to care about. You should care about yourself, your decisions and your future. If you stop caring, then everybody else will too.

"I Don't Care"

No More Love

The things that I don't care about, I would say is helping someone who I know ain't gonna help themselves or me.

And I would say that I don't care about myself too much because if I did, I wouldn't be in Juvenile Hall. But I can say, I don't care about my mom anymore because she doesn't want the best for me and seems to forget that she was a mom.

There's no more love, so I don't care, and not having a mom or parent, I'm not used to it.

That's life.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Do you wanna help yourself? You can care about yourself even though you are in the Hall. Matter-of-fact, now is the best time to start caring. The decisions that you make, starting now, will determine which direction your life goes. It's really difficult to care about yourself, or to care about anything, when your own mother doesn't care. If you don't care about yourself, how can you expect others to care? It's not too late. Now it's the time to start caring!

Forget The Hall

I don't care about being in the Hall, because one day I'm going to get out these walls. I don't care about people who talk shhh. Because to a real warrior it just can't phase me.

I don't care about people on the outs, because I'm not seeing it for a minute and that's what a six to twelve's about. But one thing I do care about is seeing my family, because if I make it out the system I know I'm the man.

So to sum this all up "I don't care". But I can't wait to get out, see my family, hold my girl, and smell the fresh air.

-Ashton-Adogg

From The Beat: Ahh... now those are some nice things to care about. You may not want to care about things on the outside, while on the inside, but that might help you. Doesn't it feel good to have something to look forward to? What do you think?

I Don't Care?

I don't care about nothing. So that's why I'm in here doing a lot of time. 'Cause I'm in the game and I'm doing my thang.

Shhh my ninja is gone, so that's why I don't care that's why I'm the way I am so, that's why I don't care about nothing and don't get it twisted.

-Lil' Scoot

From The Beat: Lil' Scoot, is there anything you care about? Sometimes shhh gets rough, and it feels like not caring is the answer, but, it never is. What about your homies that are concerned about your life? You want your loved ones to suffer the loss that you suffer? Do you care about that? If you don't care, how can you expect others to?

**We want to care,
but the system
stops us from
caring.**

Nothing, I don't care

I don't care. I'm not really worried about nothin'.

I done lost most of my potnas, so I don't care about nothin'. I'm just gone blast it out, live in it.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: When we decide to not care about anything it is out of helplessness. What is it that you do care about? Homies? Loved ones? Your life? If you choose to not care about your life, you're next. That is something to care about.

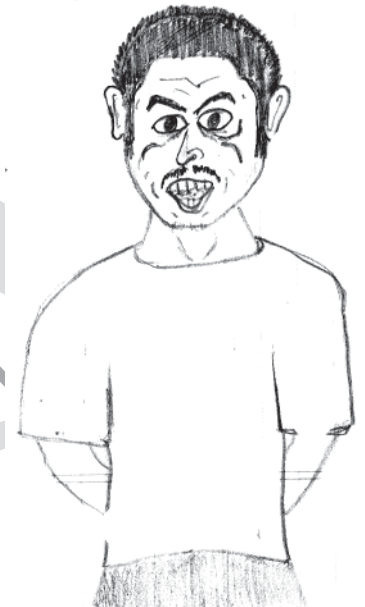
Caring About Family

I care about a lot of things. Like my family and a lot of other things.

But the thing that I don't care about for sure is the system. That's all. Because they don't care about us. That's beat (it's not like I just don't care about anything). Love to my bro De-De.

-Lil' Samoa

From The Beat: It's good to decide what to care about. You care about the important stuff. But, no matter how frustrating the system is, you should care, because you are in it. It may be hard, but the point is to focus on yourself and your family, while you are in the system. Make decisions based on that, things that you care about.



**I see my boys everyday
and they don't give a shhh**

"I Don't Care"

Chewing The Bull... or... The Beef

I live a very helpless life. If I didn't have anyone that cared about me, I think I would be on the block raising hell, or somewhere in jail for murder 'cause my killa squadron ninjas are ready for war, and I'm a killa ready for whatever. Bring me the beef and I'm happy to chew it.

-Lil' Dub B1

From The Beat: C'mon Dub, what's the deal here? You know where the kind of lifestyle you are living will lead you, so why do it? Why do you feel the need to be in a rush to destroy yourself? You say you're a "killa ready for whatever." Does "whatever" include getting shot and ending up in a wheelchair for the rest of your life so someone else has to feed and bathe you? Does it include being in places much worse than the Hall for months, or years, or forever? Does it include seeing your family torn apart? There are so many other things you could be doing with your time, go do 'em.

Forget Friends

I don't care for friends
Because friends are
Supposed to ride to the end
And not leave you hangin'
When you get caught up
They just go about they business
And keep doing what they're doing
And forget about you.

-Young Lloyd B1

From the Beat: How do you think a real friend would or should act? When you were on the outs and one of your homies got caught up, what did you do that a friend would do?

Do They Care?

I don't care about people that don't care about me. Sometimes I'm out on the streets with no home, with no life, but do they care about me? It's hard too live life on the streets on your feet. This world do care, but they act like they don't, so I don't care.

-Young Clap B1

From The Beat: Why do you feel that people act like they don't care when they really do? When you say you don't care, does this mean you really do? Is caring a sign of weakness or strength? What will it take for people to show their love for one another?

He Said He Didn't Care

People do say things like "it's nothing," like they don't care about things. Like this one kid said he was going to up to the Y and do four like he didn't care. I know he was stressing but he was trying to front. I know he was in his room thinking about the people he was leaving, but to him, it was "nothing." He at the Y now. I wonder how he's taking it. I hope coo'.

-Diddy B5

From The Beat: We know you're right, Diddy. We see the "I don't care" expression as a form of self-protection, a way of keeping the pain away, at least until you're alone and no one can see how much it hurts.

Why Do I Care?

I don't care what I gotta do to give my son the life I ain't have, but I'm willing to do it, whether it's a job or hustlin', but I prefer a job. It may not be easy to get the one I want, but I'm willin' to put my heart into trying to work construction with my uncle.

If that don't work, I'll try to apply for another job, but until then I'm gon stick to my street tactics. I know it ain't the best job you can have, but for some people, hustlin' is all we know. I ain't saying it just to try to sound hard or nothing, but that's the life some people grew accustomed to.

That's all I could say 'bout that:

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: You know we'll worry about you, Young Fatz, as long as you stick to those "street tactics." Oh, we understand how a person is raised makes a big difference to what they are accustomed to, but what worries us that you are getting accustomed to being locked up and having someone else tell you what to do. So we hope, when you get out of here, you'll give that construction job more than just a passing nod, and that you stick it out even when it is difficult, dirty, sweaty work. Because difficult, dirty, sweaty work beats jail any day of the week! You may not be able to give your son all that you'd like to, but you are the most important thing you can give him, and if you're locked up, you've cheated him out of that precious gift.

Great Personality

I care about my family
And I have a great personality
So I tell people,
"Don't get mad at me
because I ain't the bad person that I
used to be."

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: Who are you now that you weren't before? How did the change come about?

I've Heard Plenty Say That

I have heard plenty of people say I don't care, I can recall many of times when I said I don't, but really, in your heart, you really do care, because if you didn't care, you wouldn't come back from court talking about they trying to play me.

-Lou B2

From The Beat: Not much we can add to this. What else do you care about besides your freedom?

My PO Started Caring

Before, when I first got on probation, I didn't care what they told me in court I just went because I had to, But to me, it was like they said the same thing over and over, not doing nothing about the case.

Once my PO started caring, it started getting harder for me because she got me a case manager. He started checking on me in school, where I was doing, bad or not really going. And he started calling for curfew and I wasn't home.

I ended up in Y-TEC on a strict program. I thought it was still the same, so I did what I wanted to. Now, for only four curfew violations, I been in B1 for more than a week.

-Jaime B1

From The Beat: How many curfew violations do you think you should be allowed without consequences? What should the consequences be? Did you like it better when your PO didn't care? When you are older and out of the system, do you think you will thank your PO for caring about you now?

I Don't Care Till Now

One night, me and my friends were drinking and stuff, and we thought to ourselves we should rob somebody. So we did, and now I am here. I could have cared and I would not be here.

-Jb B4

From The Beat: You say you and your friends "thought" to yourselves, but we don't see much thought at all. Like kids, you took a pretty stupid idea and acted on it. And, like kids, you are now paying the price for not considering the consequences. Still, if this has made you realize that caring about yourself and your life is important, then it's worth it!

Don't Care

Sometime I just don't care about shhh. I be like forget the world. This shhh be killing me, all this shhh going on out here. Ninja playing ninja, and all the shhh popo taking a ninja down.

I don't be feelin' this shhh. Sometimes I don't care about life. I be wonderin' why God put me on this world 'cause the world ain't shhh anyway. I really don't care. We born to die.

-Yobi B4

From The Beat: Just because we're born to die (and all of us will) doesn't mean you should hurry it along. Life is short enough even when you die of natural causes. Still, we feel you in this very sad piece. Do you think God created a shady world? Why would He do that? What would make you care? If you don't care about your own life, would you care about a child of your own making? Why? Wouldn't that child also be born to die? We don't know why God put you in the world, but we know it is for more than dying.

I Care About A Lot

Mainly, I care about my daughter because she gave me reason to stay alive. At first, being on the streets I didn't care whether I lived or died. It was nothing to me. But once my child was born, it gave me a purpose to live on, my dead homies. That's just how I am.

In my life all I got is my baby and my moms. That's what I care for. Time is almost up, but I'm not going to see my lil' one in a few 'cause I'm going to the Y. But my mom is going to bring her to my crimies (y'all know who y'all is).

Love y'all family.

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: Now that you have the soul of your little girl inside you, we hope you handle your business at the Y with decency and respect, and avoid the set-ups that are there to keep you locked up. In this case, the best gift you can give your daughters is exactly the same as the best gift you can give yourself: your freedom. We will miss you in B5, Cudabeez, so we hope you holler at us from the Y and let the youngsters coming up know what's waiting...

What I Care About

What I care about in my life is my mom, Sandy, my sister, Vivian, and my boyfriend, Marcus. These three people are important to me because, in my heart, I know that they will be the only people that I can depend on to set my future right.

-Christine GU

From The Beat: You can depend on them to help you set your future right, but you're the only one who can really make it happen. Besides staying out of the Hall, what will the first step you have to take to build a positive future?

Denied

Today I went to court and I was so happy because I thought I was gonna get out. But when I went through with my trial, my PO wasn't there. I know that my PO wanted me to stay in the system. Still, I feel he doesn't even care 'bout me. Now I know that my PO doesn't care because he doesn't believe in me.

-Denny B1

From The Beat: Could there be a specific reason that your PO wanted you to stay in the system? Why do you think he wanted you to stay there? What would it take to show that he did care about you?

Cold Streets

The streets of San Francisco
Are very cold

Broken down like the end of a road
With an ending looking more like a beginning
But if you don't stop you going down the cliff
Of a messy road

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: These short little pieces make us wish you'd spend some time writing a longer piece where some of your observations can be explained — like what it means when the ending looks like the beginning. How are you going to keep yourself from going over that cliff?

The Fast Life

I am here in Jail for boosting cars
Don't nobody care
Ain't nobody gonna look after my son like me.
I think now

I will get serious
But now it makes me more dangerous
Because I can't give others space to breathe.
Life ain't no joke
And I ain't laughing
I think it's time

For me to knock this time out
and for me to be killa pops

-Dru B4

From The Beat: Let's get this straight... You already have a son, but now you think it might be time to be a real pops to him? Were you thinking about him when you boosted that car? Are you blaming other people for not caring about you, when you obviously didn't care much about either the people whose cars you took or your own son who you left temporarily fatherless? If you don't care, why should we? Yes, it's definitely time. In fact, it's way past time.

Slap Rocks

Locked up wishing I could smoke some yurple
Lookin' at them girls in purple
When I'm on the streets I'm tryna stack hard
Now I'm in the halls and fellas tryna act hard.

-Tay Dumpa Junior B4

From The Beat: We had to take out a few lines about the girls — too disrespectful. When you're in the Hall, do you try to act hard? What happens if you don't appear hard? Are you planning to change anything about your life when you taste freedom again? If not, we'll probably be seeing you again...

Real Talk

Chea! What it is wit' The Beat? Me, just posted like a thumbtack. They got a gunna on split 'cause ninjas wanna mug a young ninja. But it's nothing. I get past this.

I just found out two of my ninjas got smoked out yesterday and Monday. Shhh just ain't coo', Beat. Real talk, if you ain't holdin' nowadays, then you might as well give yo' life to the next, yadidamean? It's like that mama always said, "Don't talk the talk if you can't walk the walk."

I'm miss my ninjas though, even though Ming Lee, Fred, Reem, Joe-Cheez, Hitta, Kt and Ralow ain't wit' us, they spirit is here. RIP fallen soljas, gone but not forgotten.

-Young Cd B5

From The Beat: You say that if you ain't holdin' nowadays, you might as well give up your life, but do you know whether your two ninjas was holding or not? Seems like you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. There was a very good movie called "War Games" where they program a computer to see all the possibilities that could happen when countries start droppin' atomic bombs. (It's like saying the country is holding...). Anyway, the computer figured the game a thousand different ways, and all of them came out the same: everyone gets killed. The only way to win the game is not to play at all!

Smooth

I can't wait
I can almost faint
I'm about to get out
One of these months
When I do that
I'm going to laugh
On these clowns
Because they thought
I wasn't going anywhere
But I see that they are mad
Now how do they like me?
Now they can stay down
They can't hold me because I'm so
Smooth like ya' Kobe.

-Young Lloyd B1

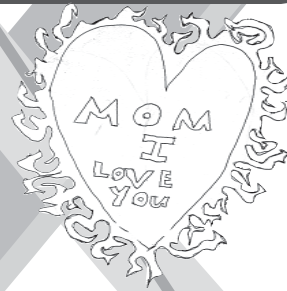
From The Beat: You say they can't hold you, but they seem to be doing a pretty good job of that right now...

Why?

Why are we so violent
But we're never silent?
All we like is violence
We see it in our neighborhood
But we know it ain't no good
But we still look up to the stuff
And our 'hoods.

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: These are questions we've been asking since the beginning of The Beat. We'd love to read your answers.



The Hall Ain't Cool

I hate Juvenile Halls
Wearing they dirty drawe's
Stretched out with no rims
Just broke down like a stem
But they all not bad
They ain't coo'.

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: How much do you hate it? Enough to do what it will take to stay out? What will it take?

PROBATION

Probation is a mother
because I'm about to be on it for this
summer
and next summer.

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: Like we said, we wish you'd write more than a sentence or two. We hope you don't violate your terms of probation, because we'd hate to see you back here...

Life Ain't Make-Believe

Early in my life, when I was 16, I got accused of some wild shhh. I turned 17 in the halls. I lost some homies to tha streets and hella more of them to the system. A lot of them that got took by the system I may never see again, and that hurts to know that I will never see people that I love. It's hard to not feel sad to know that some homie I may never see again.

But a lot of the homies and I have been prepared to depart (enslaved or killed). The homies and I are not like many who live a make-believe life that they can or will live in peace and harmony forever.

-Pg B4

From The Beat: Every time we read a piece like this, PG, it makes us sad to know that so many youngsters are growing up as if life means nothing. So many have long lists of RIPs, and yet the streets get worse and worse. What will it take, PG, to begin to turn this ugly picture around. What are you doing to change your own shhh, so that you don't end up on someone else's RIP list?

We All We Got

Born by my mother
Raised by the streets
Ran with the killaz
Stayed in the beef
Stayed with some heat
All I see is darkness
The murders started
When we lost our ninja Jarvis
I toted iron

'Cause my ninjas started dying
Reality hit me when Tweety started crying
Looking for someone to kill
But nobody in sight

I'm heated, I'm finna blast me some
Next day I get caught wit' somebody's gun
Now I owe bra geeks
But I ain't trippin'

Them boys hopped out a white van
And caught me slippin'
Now BB is all I got

I love my ninjas, Man, we all we got.

-Tay Dumpa Junior B4

From The Beat: We like the way you can tell a whole story in this flow, even though we had to cut a few words and lines (because you name names...) But what we don't like is how casually you put your life — and the life of your homies and your enemies — at risk. The rule of these streets seems to be "kill and/or be killed" because we read so many pieces that talk about the same thing. When is it no longer worth it to live this way? If you get shot in the back and paralyzed for life, what would you be writing us from your wheel chair? We hate to be so harsh, but that's real talk.

I'm Back, Fresh Out of CIA

What's crackin', y'all? It feels good to be back in the halls 'cause, trust me, YA ain't the place to be. Y'all think y'all heify, fightin' and shhh in Juvenile Hall? Wait until you hit the Y with people up to 25 years old that don't like you and is ready to whoop yo' ass. You ain't gone be so hieffy then.

Trust me, that shhh ain't coo' up there. I'm the coolest ninja, and even I had to fight a couple of battles. It's not easy stay away from negativity up there. Most of the time you're forced to fight someone else's battles. And if you're coming out of San Francisco, Oakland or any other Bay Area city, you better be able to ride and represent the Bay to the fullest. "The Bay" is one of the most respected gangs in CYA. That's something to keep in mind.

But anyway, time has been cut short. Until next time try not working your way to the Y. That's comin' from a juvenile hall B-5 OG. Holla back.

-M-Burna B5

From The Beat: And not just a B5 OG, but one of the most talented writers and poets The Beat has known. It was a pleasure having M-Burna back in a workshop spitting knowledge about his CYA experiences, which aren't over yet. We hope some Beat readers can apply these words to their lives now so they don't have to experience them first-hand...

a lot of the homies and
I have been prepared to
depart (enslaved or killed).

Don't Want To Die

Man, I'm trying to make a change
And stop running around with them "thangs"
And trying to be in the game
I see it ain't for me
Because I could have been one of the young
brothers
That died out there on the streets
But that's not for me
I'm in Juvenile custody.

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: What are you doing to make that change? Wanting to change is important, but it's not enough. You have to have a plan, a one-two-three plan. What's the first thing on your list?

I Don't Care

Forget it. I don't care no more. I feel we even got to change anyway. It's only two places we gon end up in anyway, and that's jail or the graveyard. So I put my game face on and keep it moving on these ninjas, and just keep it thug until my day come.

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: How will you know when your day comes? Every one of us will end up in the graveyard, but that's no reason to hurry the process. How can you make the most out of this brief time on earth that we're given?

Can't Lose

I can't lose. It is not in my nature. I am very competitive in everything I do. I must come in first. I gots to be number one 'cause two is not a winner, and three nobody remembers.

One would want to know what it takes to be number one, so I'm gonna tell ya: work hard and don't settle for nothing below your potential. And everyone has the potential to be number one in whatever they choose to do.

So me, I strive to succeed 'cause anything less is uncivilized.

-Tru B5

From The Beat: Well, we can certainly understand wanting to be number one in everything, and we certainly agree that everyone has untapped potential that can put them there. But of course, not wanting to lose is not the same thing as never losing. All of us lose at something sometimes, including you. (Just look around you...). So, with such a competitive nature, we wonder what you do when you don't come in first? If coming in first defines success, what defines failure?

Gone For Four Years

On July 15, 2004, I'm leaving YGC and going to YA for four years. If I do a good program, I get out in two years. For y'all know who y'all are, see y'all on the streets in two years.

-Rkljs B5

From The Beat: We admire your confidence that you can do a good program and get out in half the time. Remember that avoiding fights, where possible, is one of the most important things you can do in the Y to keep your time short.

It's Getting Hard In The City

It's getting hard in the San Francisco City
Young homies on the block with cannons, dawg, that's all I see
Homie got sparked, body laid out in the street
Can't go outside, dawg, without holding heat
This game is shady and getting more crazy
Little girl is 'bout to drop a baby.

-Young Slim B4

From The Beat: There are more and more guns in the hands of more and more (young) people, so it's getting hard everywhere. Yet, some manage to escape the madness, to finish school and lead productive lives. Why do some make it, while others fall? What can we do to help the fallen to make it?

Follow Probation

I didn't care about probation, but now I do care because I don't want to be coming here. I know if I don't follow probation, I'm going to be here.

-Jovanny B1

From The Beat: Are you here on a violation? What is the hardest part of following your probation?

The Messed Up Game

What's wit it? Me on split. Can't say no names. You know how that goes. This shhh ain't coo' though. A ninja don't ever come out three classes, 7 - 9. Sometimes that ain't right for a gunna, not now at this tight position. I mean a ninja can't afford it, yadidamean?

People be snitching, tell the DA everything except a ninja's blood type. Man-o-man, I tell you about these so-called killas nowadays, Beat. Got the game messed all up 'cause, Man, ninjas be saying anything up here and I be like I was there where you was at.

Yo' ninjas is out here where you be at. I don't know and I can't call it.

-Young Cd B5

From The Beat: Why play the game if it's so messed up? Do you have any control in the matter of whether you play this game or not, or are you just powerless to make different choices for your own life?

Moving Too Fast

Sometimes I'm thinking I'm moving too fast. It's like I'm getting 18 before I know it. But it's the fast life I'm living in so I know why it's goin' fast.

But it's nothing. I hope this time in Juvie go by fast.

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: If it's nothing, what difference does it make if the time goes by slow or fast. It's nothing, right? There are some places that you don't want to get to in a hurry, feel us?

Stupid

I just wanted to say to everybody that all this set and gun shhh is stupid. People are dying every day and for what?

I realized bein' in this hellhole isn't worth doing no dirt.

When I get out, my whole life is going to change. I ain't going to do nothing wrong and all y'all talking about guns need to drop it and squabble.

-Sensible B2

From The Beat: Sounds like you have some sense. Besides talking and writing, what do you think you could do to influence folks to stay away from sets and guns?

I Didn't Before

Before I came here, I did not care about shhh. Now I been here for a long time and been thinkin' like life is not shhh right now. We have to have our fun while we can, before it be gone. To my loved ones, stay up.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: We're really glad to see you've been putting your time to good use. What are you going to have to change in order to have fun and not get locked up?

Seize The Day

Before I ever came in Juvenile, I really didn't too much care about my freedom. Now, when I get out, I am going to cherish every day.

-Mackey

From The Beat: How will you show that you cherish every day? What changes will you make in your life?

They Care

What's really good with y'all, Beat? Well, this Jay Baby, and I want to say that I heard a lot of people say that they don't care.

Well, to tell you the truth, they really do care. Like in here, when some of these J-cats go to court and say the judge played him and say they don't care, they do 'cause all they want to do is go home and don't want to go somewhere else.

When the judge says, "Send him to CYA," they gon be crying and caring.

If I was to get sent somewhere, I would care 'cause I want to go home to my kids. I don't want to hear people say they don't care about people or gettin' played, 'cause they really do care.

-Jay Baby B4

From The Beat: We've read this from other Beat writers, and we think you are 100% right. Was there a time when you said you didn't care? What makes want to say they don't care? Is it like body armor for the heart?

How Surprising

It was Thursday morning on April 10th, 2003. I was stuck in the halls bored as hell. It was the day I was going to court, but I wasn't tripping because I was finna get out the following Sunday, from just doing two months for a warrant.

That day I was in the court thinkin' like, "I ain't going home yet." But the judge surprised me by saying, "What are you still doing detained? You should go home," and she released me.

-Jaydah B4

From The Beat: Life is full of surprises. For example, we're surprised that after you got this unexpected break, this unexpected second chance, you blew it again and came back anyway. When will enough be enough?

My Rap To My Dead Homies

I need God on the side of me tryin' to maintain
Me and the homies trapped in poverty

I wonder if I die tonight would y'all cry fo' me
And to my so-called homies would y'all bust fo' me

See Scharod and Ray Diddy still here wit' me

They ain't dead and gone, they still here wit' me

Man, the streets is getting harder, yeah, I see that clearly

That's why no one else could never get close to me

Dear Lord, I get tired of stressing

Supply your child and a loaded weapon.

RIP Ray and Scharod

-Young Slim B4

From The Beat: It's tragic for someone as young as you to have to say RIP to other boys as young as you, but we're not sure what you mean when you ask the Lord to "supply your child and a loaded weapon." Are you asking God to supply guns? Do you ever wonder what God might be asking from you? What do you think it might be?

One would want to know what it takes to be number one, so I'm gonna tell ya: work hard and don't settle for nothing below your potential.

Guns

Ever since I seen one I fell in love.
Saved my money up for a month and got me one.
Now I'm on the street playing with pumps, wait for next month.
These guns come and go but I'm glad I got me one.

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: We aren't glad you love guns, but we are very interested in what it means to fall in love with a gun. Does the gun love you back? What do you mean by love, exactly? Is it the feel of power it gives you? When you aren't packing, do you feel impotent (powerless)? Why?

What Is It

What is it, a young playa from San Francisco
Who riding straight banging on my door
What is it ninjas hanging off they doors
Yelling and fussing because they ended up with two point O.
What is it, it's crazy right now in San Francisco
Ninjas is dying fo' something stupid like fo' a zone
What is it, ninja's is dying either way, what is it?

-Jd B5

From The Beat: What do you think it is, JD? And when do you think it will end? If "it" won't end, when will your part end?

Love

Life
Offers
Very
Effect
You think about what I'm sayin' and
you might find your purpose in life.

-Lance B4

From The Beat: What's your purpose in life? How did you figure it out?

Is Life A Surprise?

Surprise, is life a surprise, or is everything set to happen? Is when a person kills somebody, is it planned out or do it just happen?

When my homie got killed (RIP Spank Money) I was more than surprised, I was shocked or stunned by the fact that there was the last time I'd seen him and it was with a bullet in his head. Somebody did the ultimate thing and took his life from us and from his family.

-J-Boom B2

From The Beat: Good questions. Do you have an opinion on this? What kinds of plans do you have for yourself?

One Time I Was Surprised

One time I was surprised when me and two of my other homies went to go rob these two guys and my homies went to one of the guys and beat his ass and the other pulled out his knife and my two friends ran on me and left me. But when he was pulling it out it flipped out of his hand onto the floor and we both ran for it, but he got it first and I ran and he caught me. I swung at him and then he stabbed me in my right arm and two times in the back.

After he ran and I had to walk down the block and my other homies were there and called the ambulance. My dad came the next day and picked me up and he had me go point the guy out, and then he dropped me off at the house and picked up my cousin and a couple of my friends and chased the dude and my dad caught him and beat him. Then later on in the day my dad found the dudes that were with me, and beat them, that's the thing that surprised me.

-Mike B2

From The Beat: Hmm, what about all this surprised you? Did it surprise you that your dad would stand up for you? Do you think it was right for your dad to hurt the folks you were trying to rob? Wasn't that your fault for messing with them in the first place? What did you learn from all this?

Two Special People

Well, in my life, there's been two special people, my mother and my boyfriend. They've been there for me through bad and good, no matter what.

Anyways, I want to say I'm sorry for having both of them going through a lot of pain, so like I said, I want to especially say sorry to my mom, Maria. I love you, mama, and to my man, Fredis. Stay up.

-Payasa GU

From The Beat: Gratitude is a beautiful thing. What can you do to show them you love them and not just tell them?

When I Came Here

I was surprised when I came here because when I was on the outs, I was like, "I am not going back to YGC no more," 'cause I was having a lot of fun. So I want to get out of this shhh and not come back. Stay up.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: So why did you come back after all?

I Never Thought

I spit my game and talked my shhh
Out of all the things I did, never thought I'd do this.
The ninja flipped the script and spit his game.
After I did what I did, he played me and I never felt the same.
I got trapped and I got tricked
I never thought I would do that,
But I did, now I feel like a hypocrite.
You don't know what would happen
Put yourself in a predicament
And see how far it will take you.
Don't say something unless you're sure!

-Bru-Bru GU

From The Beat: You're right, putting yourself in a predicament can lead you to do things you never expected or wanted to do. It sounds like you've learned a serious lesson. Thanks for sharing it with Beat readers.

You've Helped

For past three weeks I've been locked up and I have been going through a lot, but the person who helped me was Malachi. I've got kicked out from group homes and the only group home I really made friends in I got kicked out too, but I know that when I get out, I can still keep in touch with Malachi.

And sometimes I pray for him and hope the best for him, but I also need to focus on myself and try not to end up here. But if he is reading this and, anyone else, keep your head up and trust in the Lord for he will bring you through. And if you go to a group home, make sure all y'all do your program and make something of yourself.

-Frances GU

From The Beat: We're glad to see you're getting help from folks. What can you do to help yourself and make it through your programs?

I never thought I would stop going to school at the 8th grade

Things I Thought I Would Never Do

I never thought I would be here,
But hey, look where I'm at,
I never thought I would be coming in da house late,
I never thought I would stop going to school
at the 8th grade because it was boring,
But now I wish I wouldn't have stopped,
but it ain't too late to go back,
But I go to school in da Hall
doing this 5th grade work.
It's still boring.
I never thought I would disrespect my mom,
But I stopped because I love my mom.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: Now that you know you can surprise yourself in a negative way, what will it take for you to surprise yourself in a positive way?

Man Of My Dreams

(Dedicated to my love, Dominique)

You're the man of my dreams, without you I couldn't be.

Baby, I love you with all my heart and you know that. You've been with me through thick and thin, and I wouldn't change that for nothing. When I'm done with my program, I will start working on Athina and Elijah.

Baby, I need you right now more than ever. This is all for you, until pencil meets paper. Your one and only Chunky Monkey. I love you, papi.

-Alicia GU

From The Beat: It's good to know you have someone you can count on. We wish you the best.

Stay Aware

Look, all I have to say is stay safe, don't start no shhh and it won't be no shhh. And manage and accomplish yo' dreams, because you still can get pushed off this earth, you know what I mean? So like I say, stay safe and stay aware, because you can make it, so take it, the one and only.

-Mb B2

From The Beat: We agree with you. Do you live by this advice?

My Life

I can say I'm blessed by God that my father is there for me and been here with me through thick and thin, good times and bad times. And I give him much love and respect because he's been there since the beginning. He also raised my two other brothers (Lil' Tom and Cholo) since they was born.

Yeah, he's an OG and looks out for us a lot. If there's something we need, he's there to give me a hand and we chop up game and what not. I can say he's real because he teaches us how to be men and take care of what needs to be done and never give up until you get what you were after. He's one of the people I can trust with my life. If it came down to it, I'd give it up for him too, because it's a family thang. Family for life. One love to Lil' Tom in Rita.

-Young Dru

From The Beat: You are blessed with a tight fam. And we have to agree yo' daddy is real 'cause real people take care of their family and their loved ones. It's not about being a gangsta, a hustla, a playa, it's about being there for the ones you love, being there in their time of need. And you don't have to take the OG route to know that, 'cause not all OGs make it that far in life. Learn from other people's mistakes and be real and take care of the fam.

Why Stress Now?

This is yo' boy, Dirty De. I say, why stress now? They trying to send me to the Y and hold me down. And I ain't even tripping 'cause when I touch down, I'm gon' show them how we do it when I'm in Oakland. But like I said, why stress now? I did the crime, now I got to do the time.

But like I said — why stress now? That's why I stay thinking about my bra bras and hope they get they shine 'cause I ain't worried about mine, 'cause I'm going to do some time.

-Lil' Dirty De

From The Beat: You're right, why add more stress, but that doesn't mean you can't think about what got you into this mess. What do you need to change on the outs so that a cell isn't always your home? If you keep doing the same things, like stunting and kicking it on the streets, then don't expect different results — accept defeat!

Room Time

Man, I'm in my room for some bullshhh. Man, this ninja is talking shhh, but I'm the bad one.

It's coo', all I have is one hour. But it's crazy how staff be lying just to lock people up. They always want respect but don't give respect. It go both ways.

I will be going to a group home soon if I'm coo'. The first thing that comes in the staff head is "lock him up."

-Ray

From The Beat: How could you have avoided getting that hour? Do you have a plan for avoiding room time?

I Know

Well, I know right from wrong. My life is right, but the way I'm going is wrong. I try to go the right way in life, but everything I do is making me go the wrong way. I don't know why, but that's how the game we play goes, you know.

I always thought selling weed and coke was right, because all I was doing was trying to feed my family. I still feel this way today.

One thing that is very wrong is to kill little kids, that's wrong. I know that's not good. Anyways, I seen a lot of right things and wrong things in my life, but most things I see is wrong. Plus, it's wrong that I'm here locked up for no reason, but I don't know . . . I'm done, till next week.

-Silent

From The Beat: It's hard to not resort to doing what the block life give us. You are, in some ways, a victim of the circumstances. You are trying to feed your family, right? But right now you are locked up and you are not making nothing. Your family needs you. And you have time to plan how you can make your money legit so you can take care of your family and they won't ever have to worry about seeing you behind bars. You think killing little kids is wrong? How about teenagers, how about adults? What's the difference — killing is still killing. Everybody on earth was a little kid once, that little kid is inside us, 'cause we been there, so what's the difference between killing a young teen or an adult? Where do you draw the line? At what age are you allowed to get killed? 12 and up, 10 and up? Killing is wrong, period.

I Was Waiting

I was waiting on 5-0 to hit the turf that day so I done got rid of all the yays and the zips that was in the rally rims. and I smoked all the purple stems so I was high when they kicked in the door but I still took off running and I bent a corner in the kitchen and was out ran through the living room and jumped over the couch threw the TV at 5-0 and shot at the feds as I was exiting the house and I was fully strapped down so bullets won't run out

-Soul Shawn

From The Beat: Do you think that you'll always run around with a strap? Do you always wanna live the life where you're constantly watching your back? Where has this taken you so far and where will it take you in the long run? Is a lifetime of incarceration worth all the fun?

Missing Father Figure

As you can see, I didn't have no daddy. He came around when I was 15; I'm 17 now. When he came around, it was too late.

My momma tried helped a lot, but she could not show me. She did show me, but I did not listen because I was too busy going through that: "I want to be a hustla, a player, a dope dealer, and a thug all at the same time." 'Cause all I know is hood shhh, because every time when I was coming up, I used to sit on my porch and observe everything in front of my house, and everybody in Oakland used to be in front of my house.

-Lil' Joe

From The Beat: It's good that you recognize why you weren't listening to yo' moms. You was at the stage where you wanted to become a ghetto star. Ask yourself, are you at that stage right now? Is becoming a hustla, playa, dope dealer, etc. more important than being outta jail and helping yo' moms out? Spend time with the woman that did all she could to try to raise you in the right direction. Think about the options you have. Remember, you are the one who controls the decisions you make. Nobody makes them for you.

Locked Up

i don't think you or anybody ever would want to be locked up you wouldn't want anybody to tell you when to shhh eat and sleep it don't feel right to not be able to come out a room without havin' to ask somebody to unlock it for you

-Relldiggidy

From The Beat: No one wants to be locked up, but how many are willing to put in the work to change their lives — so they'll never be locked up again!

You Don't Know Me Like You Think You Do

You don't know me like you think you do come on dude, you must have me confused but I'm gon' tell you a little bit about me and what I do I go round for round pound for pound gram for gram I ain't no punk I ain't no snitch I ain't yo' . . . and on the real, I ain't to be played with you don't know me like you think you know me You think I'm a sucka, then what do you think I think about you? You ain't on my level, so stop testing me dude 'cause I'm at the point where I'm ready to misuse you and when I get done, everybody is going to abuse you 'cause you don't know me from a can of paint and you keep thinking you know me, I might have to bank and I feel sorry for you when I do like I said You don't know me like you think you do, so stop playing with me dude 'cause you don't know me like you think you do.

-Lil' Dirty De

From The Beat: This poem has a really dope rhyme scheme. But why are you trying to act so bullet proof? Why don't you just be real with yourself and the readers? What are you trying to prove? In the end, the only person you have to answer to is yourself.

A Conversation

Lil' Dada: Man, what up, I'm trying to get up out and make me some bucks.

Dirty D: Man, I got a baby on the way and they get me stuck. But I'm like you, I'm trying to get some bucks.

Lil' Shawn: Man, you talking about getting' some bucks. I then did that shhh trying to get Johnny Cochran on my side

Lil' Dada: A Lil' Shawn, don't trip, we gon' get out of this shhh, and I know that's gonna be our last time slip.

Dirty D: That's real talk 'cause bein' in here just ain't the spot.

That's just the way we live and things a' never be the same.

-Lil' Shawn, Lil' Dada, Dirty D

From The Beat: Y'all wanna make money but don't wanna come back to jail, right? Then when you get out, make sure you make that money legit, otherwise you know what'll happen.

I ain't no punk I ain't no snitch I ain't yo' . . . and on the real, I ain't to be played with

Trouble Always Finds Me

Man, what's crackin' out there? And what up to all in here! It's me, Gato, comin' back at you from the Hall.

Well, as you know, I messed up one more time. You know, it's a shame how trouble always comes up with a way to find me! But that's my life. I live as a gangster and I get the bad luck that comes with it.

You know them UCPD always trying to take me under, just because of who I am and what I stand for. Ever since I got on probation, the cops been on the lookout for me.

You know what they told my mom when they came kickin' the door in? They said that they won't stop harassin' my house until I move out! My mom was heated, too! She hates them cops just as much as I do.

I know for sure them cops ain't movin' me out my 'hood, because I'm straight smashin'.

-Gato

From The Beat: When you say it's "who I am and what I stand for" and you promise to stay "straight smashin'" — that's what gives the cops an excuse to kick in your door and harass your mom. No one is asking you to like cops, but take responsibility for your part. Use better judgment — 'cause you are making your own bad luck!

Hating Me

I hate to be locked up.
It feels like hell in here.

I want to go home.
Help me please.
I feel like I miss freedom.

Sec,
oh no,
look at me,
I'm a go to hell.
I want to go home
at once.
Help me please.
Oh no,
this place is bad.
Help me please.

-Danny Boy

From The Beat: We bet you hate it, most folks do. But do you hate it enough to change the behaviors that lead to incarceration? Sorry not all of your writing is here, but we had a hard time reading it all. Next time get your friendly Beat facilitator to read your piece before the workshop is over.

Better Than That

i came back
i was only out
for a little over a week
and what i hate
is that i came back
over something
i could have prevented
but i didn't know
until the day
i came back
i can't do nothing now
but deal with my problems
and now all i got to do
is to pray to god
and wish i could go home
and the bad part is
i can't and now people
that were here when i left
see me and say you're back
and it hurts because
i'm better than that
so if i have
another chance
i can show that i am
better than that
r i p maria

-Luis

From The Beat: You say that all there is for you to do now is to wish and pray, but in order to stay free you have to put in work, okay? And it's an inside job! You need to work on your heart and mind, to what you choose to do — or the same thing will keep happening to you. And you're better than that!

How

do you say
you love
someone
and hate
someone
all in one
i had the feeling
of love when...

-Joycé

From The Beat: We hope you complete this tale of love and hate all wrapped up in one tragic sum.

Being That Savage

i think being a savage
takes a lot out of you
because you have to go all out
and be yourself
go stupid
go dumb
and don't listen
sometimes you could get in trouble
for being a savage
and sometimes you don't
but me
i don't give a what

-Lil' Savage

From The Beat: You'll see that savage life is nothing but trouble, when you stop seeing double. 'Cause the hook and the line are one — and you lose each time you think you've won, chasing that cabbage like a stupid savage.

To All

Just want to say what's up to all in the Hall. This is the homeboy from Hayward here at Camp. Just wanna say, "Stay up and stay strong!"

The system is doing us, and they want us to go to the "Y" — so watch your steps! They're not playing with this gang enhancement. So watch out!

If anything, you guys stay up, and if you're coming to Camp, I'll be here 'cause I ain't running.

But watch out for counselors, 'cause they'll do you in. Watch out, and I'll see you when I see you. Keep your minds straight, and get out! And stay out.

-Lil' Jose

From The Beat: If you truly keep your mind straight, the counselors can't do you even if they wanted to — 'cause no matter what happens, handling it is up to you! When you flash on impulse, you hurt yourself. When you run from Camp, because you get restricted, you do yourself. No one can keep from freedom but you and what you choose to do (or not to do).

How The Cat Got Caught

Well, me and the homies were soakin' some Tecate, doin' it live! We had a barbecue at the park. We got all messed up and started acting stupid. You know how we soak in the 'hood; we kick it live and wicked, like a winning lotto ticket!

But anyways, we went to my house with my primo and my homies. That's when we pulled out the Hennessey and fools started acting up. And there was this one J-cat that came to my house, and he started talkin' out the side of his neck. I had to take him for a walk around the block.

That's when me and him got down. I started whippin' on him. Then the homies came jumpin' in for no reason, but you know how we get. So, we cut out and left him laid-out in the street.

Me and my homies cut to my house. Then the placa (police) came to my house and snatched me out. And now I'm back in this place.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: This life you're living is flirting with disaster. The tragic moment in your story is when your homies jump in on it "for no reason"! If you know how it gets, then you need to protect yourself by taking a step back from that life — or you'll end up doing serious time for bull; wasting your life like a fool. Partying hard is not worth trading freedom for a prison yard.

being in Camp Sweeney is much better than the Hall

Why Leave Me?

Why do you want to leave me?
Why do you want to go?
I love when you call me,
And it's hard to say no.
I love when you talk to me.
I love when you're around.
I feel like I rescued you,
Or picked you up off the ground.
Do you still love me?
Or are you moving on?
I always wanted you,
But you cannot con.
You cannot trick me.
So why do you try?
I love you, baby.
Why leave me? Why?

-Bilal

From The Beat: When you're inside, the world goes on. Whatever happens, stay strong. Don't assume it will all go wrong, but keep putting your feelings into your poetic songs.

Young Tezz

Yo, this Tezz! I wanna say was' up to Rell and I want to say RIP to my family, Tim, and my grams. I got much love for y'all.

And I want to say to Green Eyes, from what I read from what you write, you've been through a lot. Just keep yo' head up and rep yo'self.

To Sarah, I know it is hard to be locked down. I was locked down for three-and-a-half months. Just try to think of something else, like thinking about what you're going to do when you get out.

But I've been through some shhh. I'm from the streets of Oakland. I ain't never been scared. I've hit hella house licks.

But anyway, this being in Camp Sweeney is much better than the Hall. I got to do six to nine months here though. Sometimes I feel like running and disappearing on these cats. But if I do, it's a wrap!

I'm just gonna hit these weights and play basketball. I love my family and I got love for females. But this still thug shhh. Stay up. Holla back!

-Young Tezz

From The Beat: A good part of what The Beat's about is feeling your pain and experience in the stories of others, and offering them hope and strength from your words. But if you never experienced fear hitting a house lick, it's only because you didn't know what to be afraid of. Fear is a natural warning system, and you want alarms to go off when you put yourself in danger. Then, move beyond fear to wisdom — with the courage to listen!

he started
talkin' out the
side of his
neck. I had to
take him for
a walk around
the block

How I Am Doing At Camp

What is up, Beat! How are you doing? I am still at Camp and doing an all-right program.

I should be doing better than I am doing. I was restricted this past weekend. I got a dirty for THC. But anyways I've been doing all right.

How is The Beat doing? And how are all in the Hall doing? What's up, Shorty! And to all, keep your head up high and stay out of trouble — and if they send you somewhere, stay and do your program.

Peace out, homies. Peace out, Beat Within — I got much love for you! And to Arlene who comes to the Hall every week with The Beat Within, I want to say I got much love for you in all you do. Peace out.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Great to hear from you, Chris. And, you know what, if you're able to maintain when you get written up for a dirty or whatever, if you can stay chill, lower your head and do what you have to do — it's a major step forward for you! Staying out of trouble is best, but how you handle trouble is the real test. Learn, from what you got. And don't run, no matter what.

Cold-Hearted Street

Lil' Booda again: Snitches out in these streets. That's how all the beefs start.

Ninjas hustling on the same block are quick to snitch on thei' own people. I think it's the cold-hearted street. But I'm going to bang till I rest in peace.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: You give an accurate portrait of the sick street, but then you surrender like an addict to 'hood disease! It will kill you, just like you say — or have you counting years, not days.

Stay Strong

What up, Beat? This is Lil' Booda again, at Camp you know. I get out in two months.

I felt like running when I first got here, but I maintained and stayed strong. Ay, y'all stay up. You will be getting out soon. Stay strong. This ain't nothing.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: We're proud you've maintained against the temptation to run — and put a warrant on yourself. But don't say max' is nothing. It's real. Not everyone gets to go to Camp.

The Day My Life Got Ruined

the day my life got ruined was
july thirteenth two thousand and four
i got a two week stretch of time
between court dates but i know
i have a minimum of one-and-a-half years
and a maximum of eight years
it looks like i'll get two to three
my life just got ruined
but it's all right 'cause
i'll give the judge
stolo my own way
i wish i wasn't though
but violence won't solve it
it would make me feel better for a few
and then i'd feel worse too

-The Kid

From The Beat: That momentary release of stress in an act of violent rage, only increases the regret and maybe the time you'll spend in a cage. Yes, the stress can feel overwhelming. Try counting breaths when in your cell rather than dwell obsessively on what might (or still might not) come to pass.

Rest In Peace

What's up, Beat? This is Lil' Booda, talking from Camp Sweeney. And I'm here to say RIP to those we lost in these cold-hearted streets. RIP Jeremie, JJ, Ju-Ju, Marcus, Stacy, Mat, Greedy.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: If you think RIP means 'Revenge is a Promise' — then you might as well have shot your partners yourself. It's a cycle that never ends and will swallow you and all your friends.

Is CYA Meant For Me?

Is CYA meant for me?

If I go, could it be fate or reality?

They say it will change my mentality

Is that so?

Then, how far should I go?

If I make it to the other side of fence

When I get there — shhh will get tense!

Like the homie Goo Goo said, "Survive The Strain"

So if another man runs up, I will stick and move to maintain

They say it's a curse

But I'm doing what I got to do until I hit a hearse!

One love to Green Eyes and many more locked down. Stay up!

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: We don't know exactly what it will take for you to change your ways but we hope you can change before you have to go to CYA. Then again it sounds like you definitely have a death wish? What are you trying to prove by doing exactly what the system wants from you?

Bad News

sit back and think about
what's really going on
get a dose about reality
when you wake up out yo' zone
these crazy fools
these mainey fools
what's really the truth
but I have sad news
bad news —
i have nothing to lose
i need a role model
off a whole bottle
do what you have to
just don't burn you
trying to bake

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: It's not true you have nothing to lose, but you might not know till it's gone. Then you'll say you wish you knew. Just do what you need to do to get free — and stay free, too!

Stuck Like Glue

thanks for picking me up
when i was down
when i needed a hand
you were always around
i was drying dirt
and you planted the seed
and 'cause of you
i'm solid as a statue
and can't nobody hold
it down like you
i never thought i could
meet someone like you
now i'm stuck to you
like glue

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: It's fun to see you work and rework your poems, a little like redecorating a home to keep it fresh and new — to keep it feeling like you.

Work

Working at The Beat, is a good job. It will be my first that I ever got. I will work and help out. I will work on the computer. I want to work at The Beat even if I don't get paid for it, because it is good work.

-Chris

From The Beat: We'll have to bring you another application since the first one got messed up. Props on your initiative.

Sad Time

the time of my life was sad
sittin' in my cell wondering
when is mom going to accept me back
back into our family life
so that i can be loved again
so that i can feel wanted
instead of having to be with a man
so that the man that i am with can
give me love that i never had
it shouldn't be like that
but now i have to suffer the consequences
that i put myself through
but one day my day will come
for someone to accept me
and love me for me

-Dinesha

From The Beat: Learn how to stay free, and when you do get out — love will find you, without a doubt. Just don't let a man's words confuse you, when all he really wants is to use you. Just be you. Be patient, too, and love will come through.

Going Crazy

I feel like I'm going crazy up in here
I think this place is making me lose my mind
I wish I could do something to undo what I've done wrong
I miss being able to make my own choices
I need to feel my arms around me
I want to be at my house
I can't wait till my release date
In five years I hope I'm living lavy

-Young Bg

From The Beat: Your feelings are so real. We hear this from a lot of people in the Hall. The best thing you can do is to focus. Focus on all the things you want to do when you get out. Focus on your attitude, while in the Hall. Focus on what's important to you. Just do your time and you'll be fine. But most of all, focus on being patient.



**I miss
being
able to
make
my own
choices**

The Fourth Of July

I was very happy the last fourth of July.

Me and my friend rode around and we were partying and hanging out with my entire family. We went to the fair and then to my cousin's house! After that, we just partied, partied, and then everyone went to sleep.

-Marisa

From The Beat: That sounds like fun. Sometimes the best times of our lives depends not so much what we are doing, but who we are with.

Miss About Being Home

Being with my loved ones
Wake up everyday and eat what I want to eat
Do the things I wanna do
But the things that I do, stop me
From doing the things I wanna do
But now it's too late
The judge gave me 18 months
Things I want to do while I'm in YA
Read and write better
And learn

-Nicklas

From The Beat: Why do the things you do stop you from doing what you wanna do? It's never too late. Take advantage of everything YA has to offer, and the time you're gonna have. Educate yourself. 18 months is not gonna compare with the years after your life, it's just a small portion of time compared to the rest of your life that you will live. Ride it out, learn something, and stay strong. Oh yeah, keep writing The Beat!

Going To Try

This is my second time in the hall. I got in trouble for beating up a police officer and the police beat my butt.

I'm in the hall for two weeks, so I am hoping to get out on this Friday. So when I get out I am planning to get my life together so I am going to try.

-Washington

From The Beat: Okay, sounds good. How are you going to get your life together? What was different about this second time to the hall that made you decide it's time for change? What's your plan?

Hey You

What it do?
I hecka miss you,
Why is they playin wit me,
They tellin me y'all was 3-D,
But you gon' get out and that's on Young T,
We miss you so much,
I know I probably don't give a...
But remember who I be,
My name is L-T,
So don't trip about nothin',
I'm yo' girl to the end,
So if you need me to give ten,
Holla at yo' girl 'cause I'll times that by ten,
And I don't really drank so just give me some Bacardi Raz,
'Cause I don't need no Segrams Gin,
We pimpin' this hard,
So when you hurt you leave me a scar,
But don't trip 'cause I'll keep track of where you are.
-Young T-Hawk
From The Beat: This is a nice flow. You are definitely down for your girl, no doubt. What makes her so special to you? Do you have any memories of time spent together, that really sticks out in your mind? Share with us, tell us more.

Happy B-Day To:

Happy B-day to my grandpa and Green Eyes. I wish I could be with the both of you but I made a lot of mistakes, so Happy B-day. I'll be thinking of the both of you. One love!

-Li'l' Rickie

From The Beat: If you were on the outs right now, what would you be doing? Who would you be spending time with?

Streets Are Hectic

Those Hayward streets
Where soldiers represent till their heart don't beat!
Ninjas get swept off their feet
Or end up six feet deep.
Don't disrespect the game
That's why Hayward got its name.

-Li'l' Rickie

From The Beat: Do you always wanna chill in those Hayward streets? What else do you see yourself doing? How can you prevent yourself from having an early death?

Beautiful

Once it's clear for you to see,
The beauty in me,
You wouldn't have a problem to say,
I wish she were a dove
In my sea,
The bird that flew away,
Free to be all that it can be
Bold to let souls be free.

-Jermaica

From The Beat: Nice poem. Are you addressing this to someone in particular? You are free, free to be all you can be. Isn't your beauty clear enough for YOU to see?

Accepting The Lord In Your Heart

Lord, forgive me for all my sins.
I confess with my mouth.
I accept you as my personal savior.
Please, come into my heart.
Right now Lord, I receive you.
In Jesus' name, amen!

-Danario

From The Beat: Congratulations, now that you have accepted the Lord what are you going to do? Are you going to try and speak the word? Are you going to help others around you? How do you see your life from now on?

Making A Difference

Time of my life is knowing that I can wake-up every morning and try to make a difference in my life and for my family.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: That's a really nice way to live life. What kind of differences are you interested in making? And how are you going to do it?

A Letter To My Female

What's up Ma,

How you doing? Yeah I know you heard about what happened. Somebody did something that I bet they regrettin' now — they did somethin' foul.

I gotta go do this time feel me and I'm gonna miss you. All I can say is keep it tight and keep it lit 'cause I'm gonna stay solid. They gave me a couple years but it's nothing it was way worse until I brought that lil' discussion up in court and came to trial with a new way about doing things. I ended up changing most of my ways — feel me?

Knowing the time I'm about to fly through I'm just worried about seeing my baby when you have it but don't trip ma — you set till I get out — so don't trip I love you. I just want you to know what I'm talking 'bout.

Lastly, to all y'all lil' females, keep it lit and stay goin' 'cause that's what I'ma do. Keep it solid. I see y'all, but don't trip y'all be out soon. A ninja like me got 5-6 years to do.

-Li'l' Youngin

From The Beat: We hope that you will be using your time wisely and productively while you are locked down. We also hope that when you get out you will be a good father to your child and be there for him/her as much as you can. Do you have a plan for when you are released? We know you will make it if you try your hardest and continue to change most of your ways.

the things that I do,
stop me
From doing the
things I wanna do

I Know She Cares

It happened during the weekend I went home for a pass. After almost eight years of being with my girl, she saying she don't care any more just because her parents left each other and now she is just going through her own phase. I do know that when she get out of her phase she will realize that she do care about me.

-Charlie

From The Beat: Hopefully things improve for you. Dealing wit' relationships from an incarcerated standpoint has its struggles. (Of course, dealing with relationships from a non-incarcerated standpoint also has its struggles, because human beings are complicated and relationships are difficult.) We are curious if you think that they are worth it?

The "Y" Is Bad News

I'm glad I'm not in the "Y"

I'm glad I am still alive

If I went there I'd probably die

I wouldn't even be able to say good-bye

My mom would start to cry

The only way out is to lie

But for the rest of my life, I'ma thrive!

-Dee Baby

From The Beat: We hope that you do continue to thrive, in a healthy and free way, that is.

Doing The Right Thing

I thought I could never learn how to deal with my anger problems, but when I came here I started to learn how to control my anger.

It's a lot of people in here that tempt me to whoop they ass, but I thought about my actions and where it's going to lead me if I do whoop they ass. So I try to get all that anger out of me by talking to somebody 'cause it helps me express my feelings.

When I am done talking, all the anger is gone. After that I feel happy I did not whoop his ass.

-Young Uso

From The Beat: What was it that made you realize a change was needed? We think that you made a very mature decision and we hope that you stick with it so that you can get up out of there soon. If you can apply what you've learned when you hit the streets, which is to weigh the consequences of your acts before you do them, then you should be able to avoid places like this! Stay focused Young Uso. We think that you have some great things in your life yet to come. Can't let it pass you by if you're locked up. Right?

Never Thought I Would

Something I thought I would never be doing was treatment. Treatment has helped me a lot since I have been here. I learned how to respect myself and others, how to value and cherish life.

I also want to push myself to the max. The sky is the limit.

-Jonathon

From The Beat: The sky is the limit. What kind of plans are you creating for yourself once all of this is behind you? What do you think the most valuable part of treatment has been — and what about it helped you "to value and cherish life?"

CYA Beating Video

By looking at the tape it made me feel like damn, beating a young man when he is face down and the cops are just getting over just for they can keep their jobs.

What if they kids was in there? I'm not saying that they want they kids to go, but nowadays kids getting older, they start doing what they want to do. If they kids get beat the hell up, then how would they feel? So I think that was not right, and they need to close it down.

-No Name

From The Beat: What should the put in place of the "Y" if it ain't working? Maybe sending the CYA staff's kids to the "Y" would change the way they operate, but then again, maybe the wars would be over if we sent the politicians' kids to war instead of poor minorities. Wishful thinking, huh? So, what would you consider to be a real alternative?

The Situation Is Messed Up

How are the guard's going to beat teenagers like that, especially when they're not resisting arrest? I believe the guards should do some federal time so they can see how it feels.

CYA is a rehabilitation center, so how are they going to fix their problems when beating them create more problems? I believe they should have cameras in every rehabilitation center to see what is really going on. They should put all the inmates in treatment programs like this no matter what their case is. They try to fix their problems with some mace and sock them in the face at a good pace.

-Freddy

From The Beat: Now that you have seen what really goes on in the "Y" how does it make you feel about possibly being sent there? Was what you saw with the guards beating the inmates make you think differently about what you do in the future so that you don't end up in a place like that? We like your suggestion that there should be cameras in all such facilities, but even cameras didn't prevent these beatings — or lead to any kind of criminal charges against the abusive guards.

Turning Myself In

The night of my life was when I turned myself in to my PO on the 2nd of January. That night I was chilling in my cell just thinking about how I am going to change. That was the best night of my life because I was doing something that was good for me and my family.

Now I am in Walden House getting some act right, and I am almost out in two weeks. I am so happy, and at the same time kinda scared because I might fall back into negativity. But I also know that I was really working on what I need to do.

That's all I got to say. Thank you.

-Lil' Uso

From The Beat: You have every right to be nervous about falling back into that cycle of violence and crime that got you locked up. In fact, being "kinda scared" is a sign of maturity, the evidence of a boy becoming a man. You have made a very wise choice to change your life before it is too late. On top of it all, it really means that you have more time now to live a healthy and prosperous life. Stay focused Lil' Uso. We know that you can do it!

Surprise

Today I'm surprised. I finally made it this far, after all those times I suffered here in this crazy place. But it's O.K. I got twelve more days and I'm going home to make it.

All those in YGC, just come to Walden House and change your life. One day you'll be going back to your family. Just do the right thing, and one day you will be surprised just like me. That's a big surprise for me 'cause I never thought I would make it and I finally did.

-Anonymous

Chillin' And Killin'

The night of my life was when I was chillin' with my family, and we was smoking and drinking and shhh, and having hell a fun. I had my cousin's gun, and I was ready for whateva! So, when it got dark like around nine, nine-thirty, I saw some of my enemies.

I was by myself ready to go home, and they was in a car like four deep, and they saw me and hopped out and walked up on me, not knowing that I had a gun.

As soon as I pulled the gun out they started running like wussies. I let off like six or seven shots and hit like two or three of them. I ran back to my cousin's house and told him what happened and he asked me was I all right. I told him yes, and I stayed at my cousin's house that night because I was scared.

RIP Reem, Tay, Cheeze, Lee, Fred, D-Dirt. One love

-Young Duke El

From The Beat: Hasn't this got burnt out yet? Here you are sending shout outs to your homies that have died violently and yet you are still caught up in — and bragging about — the cycle that ended their lives. Is that what you think they would want for you? So what is it Young Duke El, are they wussies for running from gunshots? (Were you a wussie for being scared?) Would you be dumb enough to stand there when someone is shooting at you? Or would you confuse that with courage?

Staff Beating Wards At The Y

I think it's BS that happens to kids, and it makes me feel really hurt to know that shhh like this happens. That type of stuff happened to me when I was in the halls, and it brings up those issues for me.

I'm glad that many people have a passion for justice and I'm glad people stand up for justice. I hate the fact that a police union representative would try and cover the situation up. That's BS.

-War Head

From The Beat: Yeah, it's BS to many people. The amazing thing is that many people still do nothing about it! If you had the power to hold the guards in CYA responsible for what they have done, what would you make the consequences be? Are there any similarities between how these guards care nothing about the pain and suffering of the kids they're beating, and the violence on the streets that is mostly young men against other young men?

Incarceration Ain't Rehabilitation!

We grew up paper chasin'

And because of drug relations

It equals probation

And that equals incarceration

Because they'll do anything to give you a violation

Of probation

Then got the nerve to send you away and

Scream rehabilitation

Men incarcerated

Just equals premeditation

On ways to money making

So I'm makin' a standing ovation

To inform the nation

That incarceration

Ain't rehabilitation!

-Merced

From The Beat: Wow! What a powerful statement! Was it the video taped beatings in CYA you saw that inspired this piece? What do you think should be the alternative to incarceration for those convicted of crimes? If you could redetermine your own fate what kind of situation would you put yourself in now?

My Life Is Messed Up

Hey! Yo!
My life is messed up.
But hey!
I feel that I can change.
I think, "Brain, what can I do
That'll change my game?"
I come up with some things,
But hey!
It seems they're all the same . . .
How to change my ways?
How to live without the gangs?

-Anthony

From The Beat: We know from experience that our lives are sometimes messed up for reasons that are beyond our control. So instead of focusing on what we've done, we like to spend time thinking about where we're going. Gangs will be a part of your life until you make a conscious decision to keep yourself away from that lifestyle. So how do you think you'll go about doing this? Do you even want to? Well either way, we wish you the best.

Wanting Out — Being In

Just thinking in between four walls.
'Bout never ever wanting to see these walls.
To me, jail is jail.
What you did may not be big enough for bail.
It don't matter, 'cause we're all still here.
Coming back should always be the worst fear.
Always do right.
Don't go by just your sight.
Otherwise shhh will happen to you.
Next you know, you're in here, too.
So hope you may.
Just let me say.
Always live for real.
Life ain't no game, just a big DEAL!!!

-Angel

From The Beat: Angel, we agree with you, jail is jail, no matter what the name. We like your outlook on life, "Always live for real, life ain't no game, just a big DEAL." Take it one day at a time and make those days as worthwhile as possible.

Love Is Pain

Love is pain
It ain't no game
Do you think I am in insane?
To keep loving you
All these lies
I already gave you your tries
Sitting there crying
Wondering why I keep trying
I am crying
I am trying
To keep the tears in my eyes
But they kept falling
Like rain from heaven
But you know what they say
Love is pain

-Brandon

From The Beat: Brandon, we often hear it said that love is pain. But should it really hurt to love something or someone? Think about something fun that you LOVE to do, like say playing video games or listening to your favorite music. It doesn't hurt to do those things. You actually feel good while you are doing them. That is how love should feel as well. We don't mean to say that love is always easy, but if it's more pain than joy, it's time to let it go.

Lover Of Mine

We were lovers
We had our ups
And downs
Wish I could turn it around
Sitting there waiting
Wondering why you were hating
Also why I kept trying
All I am doing is lying
My soul is dying
But my heart is trying
To love you

-Brandon

From The Beat: Brandon, great poem. It is straight to the point. We have all felt this way. Keep your head up, someday you will find the true love of your life and right now you might be better off using your energy to work on loving and guiding yourself.

I wouldn't be in here right now if I hadn't violated.

My Messed Up Life

My messed up life started in 2002 when I stayed the night at my friend Trevor's house. Then I decided to drink alcohol and get involved with drugs, so we decided to go out in his backyard and throw rocks at the house behind him, causing 15,000 dollars in damage.

We got picked up by Peoria PD. They took us down to the police station and fingerprinted us, then released us into our parents' custody.

After that, I went to and was sentenced to three days of HIPS and 1 year of standard probation. That was nothing to me. I kept getting into trouble. I was in and out of court until they sentenced me to six months of intensive probation, but I messed up and violated.

I wouldn't be in here right now if I hadn't violated. But I now know that violating probation and breaking the law is not worth getting locked up for.

For those of you who have done what I've done I wish you the best of luck.

-Matt

From The Beat: You definitely made some bad decisions, Matt, but it sounds like you've learned that you want to keep doing things that will result in you getting locked up. What about your drug and alcohol use? Do you think you have that under control, or will you need to get some help? What do you think led you to get involved in drugs? Will you need to make new friends, build a better relationship with your parents, find more positive things to do? Start planning now.

It's Dangerous When?

It's dangerous when I had a handgun, because you don't know if someone is going to say something you don't like and just might pop one in them.

It is also dangerous when you are walking in the wrong neighborhood and you are from a gang and someone bangs on you.

I think it is also dangerous when you take someone's girlfriend and they get mad and tell you, you better watch your back.

I think it is also dangerous when you screw a dope dealer over because you don't know what he or she would do if they could either come after you or your mother and family.

-Dennis

From The Beat: Dennis, you definitely have knowledge of the dangerous situations people can get themselves into. How often do you find yourself in danger? Do you ever experience a "gut feeling about danger" that helps you avoid it? Or do you seek out danger because you get a "rush" from it? If you seek danger, have you ever tried to understand why and tried to find safer, legal means of getting a rush?

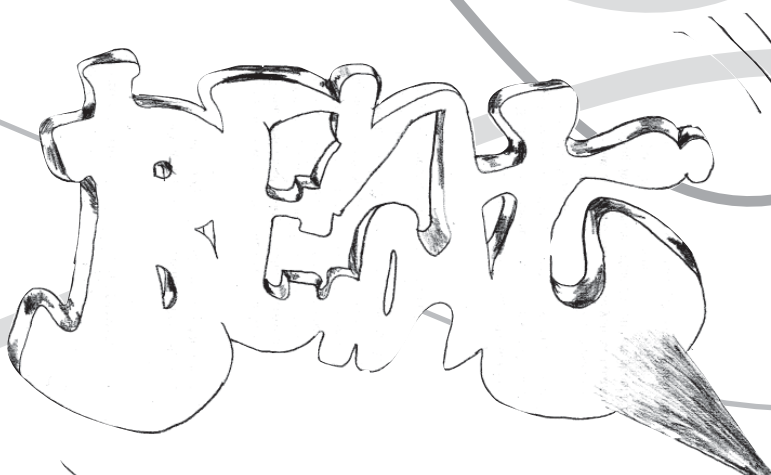
I try to escape, but I don't succeed, makes me want to give up and fall to my knees.

Insane Thoughts

Insane thoughts run through my mind,
controlling me like I'm in a bind.
I try to escape, but I don't succeed,
makes me want to give up and fall to my knees.
I am too strong to hold, so I don't give in,
but it keeps on fighting to make me live in sin,
I hope the battle inside will stop
with me victorious over my insane thoughts.

-Louie

From The Beat: Louie, it sounds like you are really struggling. When did you start having such thoughts, and do you have more the more stress you are under? Can you give us more details about what these thoughts are? Figuring out what brings these insane thoughts out can help you stop them. You may also want to talk to a staff about what you're going through. Keep fighting.



The Girl I Love

The girl I love is very import ant to me.
The reason why I love her is because she is kind and nice to me.

She loves me and I love her, so some day I hope that we can have a family.

The girl who is my life is going to the same placement as me.

-Slop-E

From The Beat: What you both need to do next is do your programs in placement, get out and be together! Go back to school, get jobs, and live beautiful lives, don't you think? Where do you see yourselves five years from now?

Messed Up Day

The day I got caught up was messed up. I was on the run for a month. I was with a homie and a homegirl, waiting for a ride, but they took too long.

When I saw a police pass by, looking where I was, I got shocked. Then six police cars drove in the parking lots with guns and shotguns. I was shocked. I was amazed. I couldn't believe it.

-Lukote

From The Beat: Why did the police run up on you like that? Did they know you were wasted? How will you get your life together when you get out?

Love, Hope and Faith

The one person I love with all my heart is myself. I do what I need to do for myself before I do for others. The hope I have is in God the most high, the one that put life in every thing that lives. My faith is little, but is growing every day.

I used to never write for The Beat, but I don't think of it that way. I write for myself to get what is on my mind off my mind for a min. My name is Emmanuel. I put my love and hope out there for the one locked up inside myself.

-Krawlar

From The Beat: Didn't God beseech everyone to love one another as you love yourself? And to be good to one another as you are to yourself? Who is the one inside yourself? Is he the same guy as the one who is on the outside, or someone else? How can he come out?

Love

Love is in the air
Love is everywhere
Love is in your heart
So find your love and start
Do not give up
Do not cry
Because someone loves you
Love is first
Never abandon love
Show your love that you care
Love is first
Never abandon love

-Jason

From the Beat: You've written a beautiful love poem, Jason. Who sis this poem for? Do you always show love the love it deserves? Are you faithful to your love?

Our Kinda Firme Lives!

In Juvy Hall, representing our orange and blue
We two firme hynas just looking for some bald-headed love

We keep it real with our homies

We like them bad vatos

Them cholos with baldheads

Tatted up, all down for their pride

Take us on a firme ride

Down to have a firme time

Keep it real

Ya sables that with us

There ain't games to be played

-Muneca and Sad Eyes

From The Beat: Nice poem, you ladies. All bald guys will love to read your poem. But what about the inner beauty a man has inside? A baldhead doesn't mean he will treat you good.

Stop Frontin

Stop frontin' like you know me
Always callin' me your homie
Stop frontin' like you know me
Y'all cats be too phony

-Smurf

From The Beat: Maybe the kids who are calling you homie want to get to know you and be your friend. Do you want them to get to know you? Do you want to be their friend? If so, can you let them know that?

**I write for myself to get what is
on my mind off my mind
for a min.**

Trapped

I am spinning my own web
Only I am wrapped in it
And I can't get out
I need help
For I am trapped in my web

People expect me to do everything
That a seventeen-year-old is given as a responsibility
But they don't understand
That sometimes it's hard
And this brings me down

I am now trapped in this web
Wondering if I will ever escape
Will I ever get my life on track?
Or am I stuck this way forever?

-Ampelia

From The Beat: What kind of web have you woven yourself into? Can you deal with each problem one at a time? Can anyone help you? Is the web a lot of problems or one big one? Will you have to give up something you value, but that you know is hurting you, to get out of your web? Can you do it?

Jalapeno

Hey, I hella miss you! Why did you have to leave me? I sit in my cell, just thinking about all the firme times we had together. You always make me laugh and smile. I hope you're having fun up there. Rest in peace! Rip, Jalapeno.

-Guera

From The Beat: Our deepest condolences to the loss of your friend. How do you keep his memory alive? What is your most cherished memory together?

A Reason To Live

I have a reason to live
People love me
Some people hate me
Some people shake my palm
Some people mug me
Most of all, I have a reason to live
Because my family loves me
Stuck in the Halls for a dumb reason
I don't wanna mention

-Lebraun

From The Beat: What about you, Lebraun? Who do you love, hate? Whose palm do you shake? What do these people, including your family, mean to you?

The Night Of My Life

The night of my life was when my son was born. It was the most intense night I ever had. It hurt, and, yes, I was in pain, but after I had him, I forgot all about it.

He is so beautiful and I never thought I'll have such a wonder joy. I had my son on New Year's Eve, at 7:27 pm. Now my son is six months, with a personality like no other. He likes to laugh, spit bubbles and talk.

I can't wait to hold him in my arms again.

-Ebony

From The Beat: How wonderful for you, Ebony! You sound like a wonderful mother. It must grieve you to be away from your son. Was whatever messed you up worth leaving him to go to Juvy? We hope you'll be back with him soon!

The Trouble I Get In

I don't care about the trouble I get in now, because I am still young and I have a chance to turn my life around still. I don't care if the judge and everyone else believes me, because I can show it when I turn eighteen.

-Terrell

From The Beat: The bad news is that you're in Juvy now, Terrell! How can you change that?

Making Something Out Of Nothin

Hey, I'm back Raza. Here is something for all of you readers of The Beat Within. Keep y'all's heads up and always make the best out of the worst situations, and take the time that you are being locked up as a time to think about what freedom means to you.

And while you are locked up, try to learn every positive thing you can.

From The Beat: Great advice. Now, can you take your own advice aka practice what you preach? We hope so! What can you learn in Juvenile Hall that could benefit you when you hit the outs?

-Flaco

La Noche De Mis Sueños

Simon, esta no es la noche de mis sueños pero estubo chido. Todo empezo cuando estabamos en la playa con las hainas. Estabamos tirando party, teniamos pistos, y cigarros, weed, de todo. Estabamos jugando con una votella, le dabamos vuelta y ala que tocaba se quitaba una prenda de ropa, huyyy. Bien chido, que no las pasamos toda la noche tirando party. Estaba chida que lástima que estoy torcido si no estuviera aqui, o anduviera tirando party todavía.

From The Beat: Que bien estubo ese juego, pero las demás cosas que incluyeron ahí, sabes las cosas malas que estoy hablando contigo. Deberias de buscar la manera en como buscar las cosas buenas que realmente estan afuera por ti. No desperdices la vida en cosas absurdas.

The Night Of My Dreams

Yeah, this night may have been the night of my life, but it was cool. It all started when we were at the beach with some girls. We were partying; we had drinks, cigarettes, weed and a little bit of all. We were playing with a bottle, and we would spin the bottle and whoever was it, he or she had to take a layer of his or her clothed off, huyyy. We spent the whole night partying.

It is a shame I'm locked up. I think other than this, I would have been outside partying still.

-Juan, Marin

Mi Sorpresa Fue

What's up, me dicen el Mousie y mi sorpresa fue cuando torci, cuando me calleron la placa a mi cantón de sorpresa. Yo ni siquiera me lo esperaba cuando derrepente me cayó la placa y fue cuando me trajeron aqui. Me agarraron bien dormido.

From The Beat: Que sorprenden, la verdad es que te cayeron en el momento que meno los esperabas. Por eso, nosotros siempre los tratamos de aconsejarlos a ustedes para que no hagan cosas malas que los llebe a terminar a otros lugares.

My Surprise Was

What's up, they call me Mousie, and my surprise was when I got locked up when the cops came to my house by surprise. I wasn't even expecting it, when suddenly, the police came and brought me here. They caught me really sleepy.

-Juan, Marin

La Noche De Mi Vida Fue

Todo empezo un día por la mañana, me lebante de mi cama, fui al baño, me mire la cara y pense que necesitaba algo porque no me sentía bien. Entonces me bañé y me cambié de ropa, sali por la ventana a caminos hacia mis homies. Me fui a cotorrear todo el día. Empezamos a pistiar y a fumar yesca hasta que nos pusimos una gran peda. Después me fui a mi casa y me encontre a una ruca que estaba buena. Me presente y comenzamos a caminar. La lleve hasta su casa, y ella me dijo que se quería poner bien loca. Quería fumar mariguana y le di para que fumara. Después entramos a su casa y no había nadie. Empezamos a platicar a y después ya saben lo que pasó toda la noche. Esa fue la noche de mi vida y la seguirá siendo.

From The Beat: Que bien parece que te la pasastes con esta muchacha. Nos gusto que todo lo hayas escrito respetuosamente. La verdad es que fue una aventura muy traviesa y tranquila, pero lo bueno que es que se la pasaron bien y eso es lo que cuenta. ¿Que no?

The Night Of My Life

It all started one early morning. I woke up from bed, went to the restroom, and washed my face. I thought I needed something because I wasn't feeling good. I took a shower and I changed my clothes. I snuck out the window and headed to my homeboys. I kicked it all day. We started by drinking and smoking weed until we all got wasted.

Later, I went home and I met a girl who was good looking. I introduced myself and we started to walk together. I walked her home and she told me that she wanted to get wasted, too. She wanted to smoke weed and I gave her some to smoke. We went into her house and nobody was there. We started to talk, and later, you guys know what happened later.

That was the night of my life and it will continue to be.

-Anónimo, Marin

Como Quisiera

Como quisiera decirte
Los secretos de mi corazón
Como quisiera explicarte
Como me engañó mi primero amor
Como quisiera enseñarte
Que todavía tengo miedo
Como quisiera saber
Si piensas que esto es un juego
Como quisiera ver
Lo que pasa por tu mente
Como quisiera que me explicaras
Lo que piensas de mí claramente
Yo te digo todo
Y esta hayna nunca miente
So dime lo que piensas mijo
Dime si mi amor es suficiente

From The Beat: Hay muchas cosas que te gustarian saber de este chico. Nosotros te aconsejamos que dejes que el tiempo descovije lo que realmente este chico esta hecho. Toma todo con calma y no te presipites. Enfocate más en tu salida, en ordenar tu vida.

How Much I Wish

How much I wish
I could tell you the secrets of my heart
How much wish I could explain
How my first love betrayed me
How much I wish I could show you
I still have fear.
I wish I could know
If you think this is a game.
How much I wish I could see
What goes through your mind.
How much I wish you could explain to me
What you think about me clearly.
I tell you the truth
This girl never lies to you
Now, tell me what you think
Tell me if my love is enough.

-Sad Eyes, Marin

Lo Que Me Importa

Cuando yo estaba afuera, no me importaba nada y ahora lo que me importa es salir de aqui. Cuando estas afuera vuelves a ser el mismo que eras antes. Vuelves a tomar o a fumar drogas y por último caes preso y te cagan el palo los staff.

From The Beat: Esperamos que estas palabras las conserves y te des cuenta que realmente es esto a lo que uno llega a terminar. Esperamos que cuando salgas no vuelvas a caer en ninguna actividad de esta.

What I Care About

When I was on the outs, I didn't care about anything, and now what I care about is getting out of here.

When you are on the outs, you become the same person you were before, you drink and use drugs, and then you get locked up, and the staff messes with you.

-Magic, Marin

Lo Que No Me Importaba

A mí no me importaba nada. Siempre andaba peliando con mi novia y nomas por un pretexto para salir e ir con otras rucas o ir con mis homies.

Tampoco me importaban cosas importantes para mí como mi relación con la mamá de mi hijo. Antes no me importaba pero ahora me doy cuenta que si porque cada vez cuando la llamo y me dice que fue en un lugar que no quiero que vaya yo me molesto porque no sé que estará haciendo y es por eso que ahora me importa las cosa mas de mi relación con m novia. También ahora me arrepiento de haber jugado con mi ruca y haberle mentido con otra pinche ruca.

From The Beat: Lo bueno es que te acabas de dar cuenta que estas estropeando tu relación, que es lo más importante que deberias de poner atención. Acuerdate que hay un hijo por medio, lo cual deberias de cuidar y darle la atención que se merece. Cuida esa relación porque es una relación muy importante y te arrepentiras en el futuro no habe hecho nada al respecto.

What I Didn't Care About

I didn't care about anything. I would make any excuse to fight with my girl so I could go out with other girls or to hang around with my homies.

I also didn't care about important things that I needed to pay attention to, like the relationship with my baby's moma. Before, I didn't care about my girl, but now I realize that I do care, because every time I call her and they tell me that she went to a place I don't want her to go to, I get mad because I don't know what she could have been doing there. And that is why I feel I care about my relationship with my girl. And I also regret playing with my girl now and cheating on her with other girls.

-Li' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

Lo Que He Escuchado

He escuchado a muchas personas decir que no les importa estar aqui, pero cuando tienen bastante tiempo estan llorando en sus cuartos y rogandole a Dios para salir. Yo siempre digo que me importa porque yo si quiero salir y ya estoy muy cerca.

From The Beat: Esperamos que en verdad sigas con el interez de estar afuera para cuando salgas retengas tu cuerpo afuera de esta cárceles. Acuerdate que todo lo tienes en tus manos, no lo dejes perder.

What I've Heard

I've heard a lot of people say that they don't care about being here, but when they're here for too long, they start to cry in their room, begging God to help them get out of here.

I always say that I do care ,because I do want to get out of here, and I know it'll be soon.

-No Name B1, SF/YGC

I also didn't care about important things that I needed to pay attention to

ANTHONY Anthony aka Young Spanks is one of our new, and excellent Beat office volunteers, and we're really happy to have him here. We met Anthony at our Walden House workshops.

Livin' Proper

Right now I am livin' better than I ever lived in my whole entire natural life now that I am now out of the adolescent services of Walden House. My whole life has changed into something I would have never imagined. I'm clean and sober for 2 years and 5 months.

To keep it real, I didn't think I could last one month without drank. Somehow I did it. I give my highest praise to God. Without him or whatever kind of luck I have, I could not have made it.

But then again, there's things that are happening in my life that I wish never happened or will happen. It's mostly about death. In the last three months, about nine people I know have died. It's hard gettin' used to that.

Then being independent is very hard for me. But being young, people tell me that I got it good and when I get their age, I will be a millionaire, so I'm soakin' up all that game and applyin' it in my life.

Through all this I'm surprised I haven't did any thing stupid. I appreciate The Beat for letting me write this; I needed to. One love, God bless!

Right now I am livin' better than I ever lived in my whole entire natural life now that I am now out of the adolescent services of Walden House.

Random Lyrics

Livin' life right about time
I can't rely on nickels and dimes
Ask God all the time to let me see the sunshine
I been through the rain
I'm tired of pain
I'm tired of my family seein' me damn near tears
So take all shhh in life and cope
My lil' bra and his folk need things I got legal money screw dope
It's a sunny day the breeze
Got the best me looking out the window,
What do see? Natural beauty
Amazed by baby girl in passenger seat of da grey Hummer
So I do it movin' headed to the raggedy 'Yota
Knowin' once I hit the freeway the whole car might blow up
I don't need the OPD to sho' up
I just got off probation so the streets I'm strollin'
Hittin' corners not knowin' why this Newport I'm smokin'
Why I'm still smokin' nicotine, God please show
What to be of my destiny I was taught many lessons
I guess it didn't work, so I'll try again the nicotine patches

LADARO PENNIX As part of a letter, Ladaro Pennix writes *The Beat Without* about what it means to be incarcerated in Pelican Bay and Corcoran State Prison SHUs, (Security Housing Units) and how necessary it is to stand up to authority even in the SHU, in order to maintain your integrity, dignity and sense of worth as a man.

The Powers That Be (An Excerpt from a Letter)

I'm in the Corcoran SHU (Security Housing Unit) because I know who my enemy is and I battle them to the extreme. Who is my enemy? The powers that be, which consist of these authorities who have subjected my fellow confined human beings and myself to their "systematic terrorism." They have us all marching to their drums, happy as mindless clams, until we understand that when the drum rolls stop, so do our alternatives.

We buy what they want to sell us, we take what they want to give us. We believe what they tell us to believe. We accept their beatings, their corruption, their extortion, their monopolizing and their reign of terror upon us...or else! This is all consistent of "systematic terrorism," which is a hell of a term, but it's true.

I am in the SHU because I refuse to accept the onslaught of these barbaric authorities, no matter how great their terror is. And so, just as much as they give, I, in kind, exchange the favor in return to the extreme. Being terrorized by these officials ain't nothing nice, but to accept it without resistance not only makes a man a coward, but it also strips his dignity, his self-respect, his tenacity, and more importantly, his worth as a man.

How can a man be a man if the very essence of his worth is stripped away? He can't! And so, when he comes home from the confines in which he was terrorized, it's

no wonder why he's so messed up in the head, when he comes home acting more childlike than his age.

When you're broken, you develop the mentality of a child who lives in constant fear, naïve of the independence that one develops as he grows wiser in life. This causes the adult-male to not only be submissive within these confines, but also when he is released. Like a fearful child who is no longer under supervision, that adult male finds himself acting like the child he has been broken to be, as well as finds himself dependent on everyone, such as a child would be.

"A man who possesses his worth, possesses his true identity as a real man." I cannot stress enough that adult-males in here need to embrace the strength, responsibility, education, intelligence, common sense, motivation and independence (which are just a few elements of many that create a man's worth) so that they may understand themselves as individuals and become the men that they need to be, to overcome this systematic terrorism that leaves many of us torn, broken and mentally deceased.

I've been in the SHU since '98. I'm supposed to get out of the SHU in 2012. Of course, I plan to be home before then, but if not, I'll be in the SHU until that time. Though I may have a very extensive SHU term, it doesn't affect me a bit, because each and every SHU term I've received, I caught it in the process of protecting my worth and/or protecting other confined human beings' worth, which makes me proud to do this long and extensive SHU term.



RENE ARAGON

The following pieces come to us from Beat associate, Rene Aragon, the beloved daughter of the late counselor Ms. Aragon of SF/YGC. We all miss Ms. Aragon — especially her daughter Rene. We all at one time or another take our parents love for granted because it's unconditional — unlike the love of our friends or significant others which comes every so often. We expect it to always be there; therefore sometimes we don't nurture it. We were all emotionally affected by Rene's poem called "I Pray." It touched us in profound ways. We hope you enjoy reading all of these poems!

A Note From Rene

I wrote this poem "Unpretty" when I was in high school. It's self-explanatory. There's not really much to say about it, because you'll understand how I felt and how I still feel sometimes, when you read it. I never thought about putting this piece in The Beat, 'cause I never thought it was that good, but one of my friends liked it so much and kept telling me to put it in. I said ok. This is going out to all the females who ever felt like me and even the guys. This is for Ms. Arlene Mitri.

Unpretty

I walk down the halls as cool as can be
But to a guy all they can see is the one next to me

I wish one day I can switch shoes with you
Maybe you'll feel unpretty too

But in reality the only thing that makes me different from you
Is what you put on your face, which takes an hour for you to do

Maybe one day you'll feel like me
But I hope I'll never look like you

Don't judge a book by its cover

I Pray

I pray at night
Wishing you were still by my side
I pray at night
Wishing I didn't have to cry
I pray at night
Wishing I could see you
I pray at night
Wishing I could be just like you
I pray at night
Wishing I could take back all the lies
I pray at night
Wishing we were a family
I pray at night
Wishing we were all still happy
I pray at night
Asking God why?
Why must we live to die?
Why must He take away so many people's
lives?
I pray at night
Wishing I could say sorry mommy

in reality the
only thing
that makes
me different
from you
Is what you
put on your
face, which
takes an
hour for
you to do

Part I

Don't judge a book by its cover
When you saw me walking down the block you chose to holla
But now I wish you hadn't even bothered
I was always taught to look on the inside and not on the outside
But when you saw me you judged my looks
Tight jeans and beanie caps
Thinking you could make my cheeks clap
Because of this
you thought I was a hoe and 'cause I'm from the "ghetto"?
But looks are deceiving
Thought I was like every other female — not even worth a dollar
But baby believe I'm priceless and you sure as hell ain't no balla
It took me awhile to realize I deserved more than you had to offer
I fell into your trap but you fell into mine too
Screw all the I love yous
You thought you could stick your thing in me and leave
But what you failed to realize while planning your next move
Is that I'm a female with class
And my mama taught me that
So you could never get between my knees
No matter how much you beg and plead
But like I said looks are deceiving
While you approached me I looked right through you... on the inside
Your act was wack
And how did you fall into my trap you ask?

TROAS BARNETT

After a short absence, Troas Barnett — better known to readers of *The Beat* as Sankofa — returns to the world of *The Beat Without*. This piece was written a few months ago but took a while to wind its way through postal services (prison and public) on its journey to the office, and though the movie which is the impetus for this piece has come and gone from the box office, the central point of the piece is as appropriate now as it was then. We thank Sankofa for dropping this piece our way, and we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

All of this is not ancient history, and for the oppressed the conditions we face today are not that different.

Remember Damian Garcia

"The Alamo," a recent new \$107 million movie, was released on April 9. It supposedly tells the story of the 1836 siege of the Alamo, defended by 182 Texans against the 4,000-strong Mexican army during the Texas so-called war of independence. In this battle, all these Texans, who were really invaders and settlers from the US, were killed. Ever since, "remember the Alamo" has been a call for vengeance against the enemies of the US. The propaganda for this movie promises that it will portray the incredible true story of two sides who fought. If you don't already know Texas history you, after seeing this movie, will get no idea of why this war was even fought.

300 years ago, Spain claimed Texas as part of its empire. Spain ruled Texas through its authorities in Mexico City. In 1718 the Spanish colonists established a fort and a Catholic mission in what became San Antonio. They called it the Alamo, and it was part of the plan to supposedly civilize the Indians and take over the new world. The resistance of the Native Americans — especially Comanches — proved too much for the Spanish. Out of 25 garrisons built in Texas in the 18th century, the Spanish could only hold onto three. The Alamo was one of these. Beginning in the early 19th century Anglo settlers from the US began illegally crossing into Texas, setting up farms and plantations on Mexican land.

Those southern owners of Africans who were in bondage constantly needed new land to expand into. Northwest Mexico — what is now the US southwest — looked very promising to them. Sensing a threat from the US, the Spanish government tried to control Anglo-American immigration. Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821 and the new government followed a policy of allowing Anglo-Americans to settle. They were given grants — provided they became Mexican citizens and converted to Catholicism.

By 1835, Texas had about 35,000 inhabitants of Anglo and Tejanos (Mexican people born in Texas). The Anglo immigrants outnumbered Tejanos six to one. Then, the Mexican government abolished slavery and the Anglo slave owners and their allies rose up in a reactionary war to tear Texas away from Mexico. They put out a call for Americans to come to their aid, promising to give mercenaries free land.

The Texans took over the Alamo in San Antonio. On March 6, 1836 the Mexican army, commanded by President General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana retook the Alamo, killing all 182 Texan defenders. All but nine of them were Anglo invaders, many like the land speculator Davy Crockett, who had just recently arrived in Texas in mercenaries. Jim Bowie, another alleged hero of the Alamo, was a despicable slave trader, and Colonel Travis another mercenary.

Six weeks after the fall of the Alamo, the Anglo forces surprised the Mexican army in the battle of San Jacinto. In that battle, the Texans shouted "Remember the Alamo!" to justify their bloody revenge and massacre. General Santa Ana was captured. In return for having his life spared, Santa Ana signed a treaty recognizing Texas' independence.

One of the first official acts of the new Republic of Texas was to legalize slavery. In 1845 Texas was admitted into the United States as a slave state and soon joined

the southern state Confederacy in the US Civil War.

The war waged against Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barrett Travis and those slave traders and mercenaries who invaded Texas and then stole it from Mexico was a just war. To honor the Alamo means glorifying the extermination of the Lipan Apaches, Aranamas, Karankawas, Tonkawas, Kohanis, Cocos, Bidais, Nacisis, Koasatis, Eyeishes, Nabadachies, Nacogdoches, Kichais, Hainais, Anadarkos, Yowanes, Tawakonis, Wacos, Caddos, Kickapooos, Kiowas, Kiowa Apaches, Tawehashes, Comanches and more. All these people were wiped from the earth forever after Texas won its independence.

Is this to be glorified? If so, it means glorifying a so-called "valiant struggle for freedom," which was really a war fought so that Africans in the end could continue to be legally bought and sold as pieces of property! It means glorifying the arrest of over a hundred Black people in 1835 when many were murdered for planning a slave uprising — just as these Texan slave owners were planning their uprising against Mexico. It means glorifying the Jim Crow system, the terror of the Ku Klux Klan, and the lynching of the countless Black people in Texas history. It means glorifying and upholding countless crimes and oppressions right down to modern times, like the murder of Joe Torres who in 1977 was beaten and drowned by six Houston cops in a Houston bayou with them saying, "Let's see if this wetback can swim."

Yahoo godfathers George Bush and Tom Delay are from Texas. The Texas of 2004 is different from the Texas of 1960. Houston is not 37% Latino and 25% Black, aside from other nationalities such as Guatemalans, Palestinians, Lebanese, Arabs, Chinese, Vietnamese, Koreans, Iranians, Pakistanis, and Indians. So the majority of Texas is now non-white. And in the middle of all this is the ongoing war at the border against immigrants. US rulers remind everyone that they intend to dominate places like Texas and control that border they created through war. All of this is not ancient history, and for the oppressed the conditions we face today are not that different.

Remembering comrade Damian Garcia: On March 20, 1980 Damian Garcia scaled the walls of the Alamo with two other people. They tore down the US flag and raised the flag of revolution. From the top of that reactionary shrine Damian announced, "We've come to set the record straight about the Alamo. This is a symbol of the theft of Mexican land. A symbol about the murder of Mexicans and Indians." Damian called on people to come out in struggle with people worldwide on May 1st, International Workers' Day. Although they were arrested for destruction of a venerated object, that "venerated object" was the Alamo itself.

Only weeks later, on April 22, Damian Garcia was murdered by police agents while doing revolutionary work among the people in a Los Angeles housing project. Stung by his bold act, furious at the emergence of a revolutionary force opposed to the Alamo and the ridiculous belief in what it represents, the enemy had lashed out with a vengeance typical of the Alamo myth.

This is Sankofa, the one who looks behind him for answers to the past, solutions to the present, and a plan for the future, giving a shout out to the youth! Know that the past gave birth to the present and that what's occurring now will give birth to something else.



INNIS JOHNSON

Here we have another fine — and we'd like to say the finest one he's sent so far — commentary by Innis Johnson. Innis writes us from facility in Beeville, Texas, so he knows a little something about the prison state we're all living in. Please read this piece all the way through and think about what you're doing and where you're headed.

Politicians that claim to be tough on crime win elections more than half of the time.

Who's Pimpin' Who?

That's the question directed at the masses of "us" locked up tight inside the state or federal prison system of the USA.

Now I don't know about any of you, but where I'm from, if you contribute to the next man's cause without receiving justified benefits for your actions like the man whose cause you've contributed towards has, we would consider you officially pimped!

If you would, read the second paragraph over once again, because I don't want my understanding of the word "pimp" to be controversial. I'm willing to bet if you give it one more slow, word-for-word read, you'd write the publishers of the Oxford American Dictionary and request my definition to become a entry in the next edition that's published.

Now the point of my question is this, those of us who are locked up have a few things in common for sure. What we all have in common for one is this, in one form or another, right or wrong, we've all been accused of breaking the L-A-W. Now what we have in common for two is this, there's one person on this earth for sure who knows whether or not if the accusations they're being accused of are true or not. Third, what we all have in common is this, by the time you're done reading this article, you'll be able to answer the question who's pimping who.

Fellow inmates, peep game, please. The police department, the sheriff's department, DA's office and state and federal defense lawyers, judges, PO's, and all the federal law enforcement agents, politicians and legislators would all have to find another means of income to feed their family from if it weren't for you sitting in that special manmade holding house.

It basically works like this, the law-abiding citizens of this country who pay taxes, put those prisons and jails up to house non-abiding citizens. They put the courthouses up so that they can sit in them and face you eye-to-eye in order to expose your shame before they put you in one of those special manmade holding houses. They put the police, FBI, DEA, and every other crime-fighting element they have in the streets of your local hang-out spot. This way they keep an eye on you, that's why they always find you when they have to house you in one of them special manmade holding houses. They elect and pay the DA's to make sure that once you've been accused of wrong, the accusation turns out right. They elect and pay the judges to make sure that your ignorance of how this all works will only hurt your chances of escape. That state-paid defense lawyer you had defending you in trial, who you hate so much, yeah, they pay him, too. You should get the point with where I'm going with this with my explanation of the element of the legislators.

Did you know that laws are made to be broken? Every law that we are governed by exists for one reason and one reason only, that reason is to separate what the "majority" of the people say is right from what the "minority" of people say is wrong, and vice versa. Legislators put these laws in legal effect. The majority of the people that agree with these legislators are

the same people who elected them to put these laws into effect.

Now answer this, when was the last time one of you (my fellow inmates) voted to elect a state or federal legislator? Ninety percent of you probably don't even know how, the other five percent that do don't care, and the remaining five that did voted wrong! In other words, you're not one of the majority, because if you was, your wrong would be right, therefore legal, and you wouldn't be sitting in that special manmade holding house.

Politicians that claim to be tough on crime win elections more than half of the time. Now fellow inmates, all these people are being paid because what the majority of the people say is wrong, which they say you did, is what contributes to their profits. When politicians pitch their "tough on crime" speeches, what they are basically saying is that they will get tough on you! You see there's big time money being made off of you when you get caught for stealing a car or breaking into a house or selling drugs, it's big business. You might be clocking snaps yourself by these actions, but yours can't add up against what the majority of them law-abiding, tax-paying citizens are kicking out to those they put in place to round us up as non-law-abiding minority citizens when we do what's right by us but wrong by them.

If we, the minority (and when I say "minority," understand I don't mean race, I mean group of criminals), all stop doing what we feel is right and start doing what the majority feels is right, they wouldn't have no reason to spend all that bread that they kick out to that beast-of-a-pimp they call the system. They wouldn't need to because we'd all be abiding by the laws as they see fit. To be more detailed, when you break the law by doing what the majority say is wrong, you contribute to the beast-of-a-pimp called the system in more ways than you can think of.

When we do that, we lose all the way around no matter how you look at it — emotionally, financially, and family-wise. And on top of that, you're helping to benefit the group of people that gain off your loss, that beast-of-a-pimp called the system. You ever wonder why the big time politicians never say they're going to eliminate crime? Well, for one, they can't. For two, that's not their cause no way. Their cause is to fight it, help it increase, and make sure the taxpayers know only that it's on the rise.

Every individual, including myself, in a special manmade holdin' house is a commodity of the system, that beast-of-a-pimp. It costs to house, feed, clothe, and secure a minority citizen getting caught what they feel is right. Notice I didn't include rehabilitation as a cost. It also costs to prove that the allegations that you've been charged with are fact. Now somebody has got to pay this money out, because somebody has got to make money for their actions. Funny thing is, your actions, my fellow inmates, are the reason why all this money is being made, but you don't get one cent of it!!

Let me ask y'all one more time, who's pimping who?



GHETTO PREACHA

No joke, this next writer is a first time writer who truly steps up big with very appropriate questions, which he asks in the following well written piece titled "The Investment." It is an honor to introduce you readers to the Ghetto Preacha! The Ghetto Preacha writes from the heart. Every single word he writes you can feel his love, from "The Investment" to "To The Girls," and his last piece "The Homie Upstairs." Enjoy the following and we anticipate more from the Ghetto Preacha who writes us from an adult prison in Arcadia, Florida.

Feeling alone isn't that bad if you understand why you're alone.

The Investment

"Are you getting what you want out of life? What do you want out of life? I hope you want to be successful and excel in life. If you do, then you need to push towards that. Make an investment plan. In order to reach your goals and be successful, you must invest in them. You have to put in time, effort, and dedication. These three elements make up the tools that you need. Do you have plans for the future? Are you starting right now?"

You should be if you're serious about your life. Have you ever heard the phrase, "if I do what I always did, I'll get what I always got?" It's very true. By now you should be able to tell, it's time to change your game plan for life. I'm not here to sound like I know it all. I'm just trying to help y'all by giving it to y'all raw! I know some of y'all are going to read this and move on to the next piece before you get halfway through it, but some of y'all who care about your life will read this, and remember the things that I am about to say. Anyway, actions are like gifts to our lives. Decisions determine rewards. Sometimes rewards affect others, too. So, "when you know better, you do better."

Investors on Wall St. make decisions everyday, and if they can, they do it to their advantage. If their investment doesn't prove itself to be worth it, they invest in a different share.

Evil is always present when we want to do right, but our mind has to be made up. Tell yourself, "I'm going forward, not backward." You're young, but you can become old in your mind. In other words, you can become wiser. There's always hope. Make the right investments. Work on your life. Do something with it. Go to school while you're locked up. I am.

I'm getting my GED. I'm 24 years old. I have given up on myself, but you shouldn't. If you do what you're supposed to, in time, you'll see change and growth. Don't waste your life being idle.

I know "The Beat" is going to respect this because y'all are just kids and y'all need to be taught and comforted. Fires only get bigger by adding fuel to them, so for those who want to get somewhere in life already, I'm gonna feed you the fuel.

"Do the 'time,' don't let the time do you. Take it easy, refocus and start striving. If you learn your lesson, take your life seriously. Then, you won't have to come back. Let go of the negativity and hold on to the positive. You have to, if you wanna make it. I tried doing both already; it won't work."

It's or the other y'all. Forget about being popular, having a boyfriend/girlfriend-especially if you're young and locked up. If you invest in your priorities, your life will be easier in the future.

Trying to have a lot of friends and being successful doesn't mix either. Friends hold us back, discourage us, and friends have their own problems. If they don't have a positive influence on your life, cut them

off because they infect your future and stun your progress in moving forward. Victory is ahead and failure is behind. Don't go back to that old lifestyle.

Worse, when you know you want to do right, just because of that feeling of loneliness. Reading, writing, prayer, and people who want to be successful will give you the help that you need.

To all of you 21 and under, I've been there, done that, and I don't want it anymore.

Feeling alone isn't that bad if you understand why you're alone. You're alone because you need help. You're alone to renew your mind and leave there with something you didn't have when you came.

I feel down, too, and lonely, wishing for more friends. I don't let that stop me from doing what I need to do, or becoming the person that I'm trying to become. I'm an overcomer, you are too, if you get this stuff stuck in your mind.

Talking about it is not enough. You have to be serious about your commitments to have better in life. I made the decision, when I first got to the County Jail to want better for myself. It cost me my friends, too! So WHAT! They were holding me down.

A true friend will see you trying to do well and encourage you to keep going. A true friend will tell you to tighten up and stay focused even if they see you getting even a little bit off track.

We have all found out what being "down," cool, and popular is all about-nothing!!

Now, I know what being a nerd was all about. They say, "if I knew then what I know now...." I say, "Do what's important and what's best for you, even if it's not popular." In the end, being popular isn't what matters."

I love you all and God does too. You all have a purpose in life, so don't get sidetracked. You all are somebody special. Sometimes life can be like a rose to us, but remember we have to accept the thorns that come with it. Even if nobody else does, I care about all of you, even the staff at "The Beat," "Broken Glass," and "Estrella." I hope you're reading this. I'm not looking for a girlfriend and I'm not trying to gain the favor of the staff, either. I'm just being myself and being real to everybody on every level.

As a matter of fact, since my discovery of this magazine, it's burdened on my heart to inspire, motivate, and be a big brother to the young in this magazine. They need it bad and too many adults are selfish and inconsiderate of the needs of our young people. I want to make a difference.

So to the staff, it's a family affair to me. To these children, people like you and I will be the only family they know, believe it or not. So let's love these children for real and be a family to them. Beat staff; all they got is us, there aren't too many people like you all around nowadays.

So if I'm welcome to your magazine, here I am. Consider me family because I'm in here to stay!



Their genuine joy can bring a tear to their loving father's eyes with ease.

GHETTO PREACHA (CONT.)

The Homie Upstairs

What's up? God bless you. It's good that you're honest about the things that you're dealing with. Spend more time with the homie upstairs because he cares and he still answers prayers. Step closer to this throne and away from the musical chairs. None of us have to obey the commands of our mind. Before I obey my mind, I ask myself, "Is the command evil or good, the voice of the Lord, or the Devil?" God has so much more for you. You haven't seen anything yet.

When our lives are at their worst, God is ready to do His best. I dare you to follow the Lord like you follow your thoughts. He has a plan and a great purpose for your life. They say, "Whatever works."

Well, I have seen Him work for so many people.

When you read the word, you're spending time with Him. It's worth it. He won't break your heart and He won't let you down. He fixed my life for me. I called out to Him and He answered me. Many people call on Him in times of trouble. Once he takes care of their problems, they forget about Him. The key is will you still call out to Him once he fixes things?

That's the difference between "religion and relationship." When two people are in a relationship, they communicate daily. They agree to spend adequate time together and they become one. If you spend time in prayer and studying the word, he'll speak to you. He'll open your understanding to know his desire for your life. He knows what's best for you and he wants you to have that. There's so much hope for you. It says in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

My mama was on crack when I was 17, but I put my trust in the Lord. She has been off crack for six years and one month.

I believe you are a powerful influence wherever you go. God wants to use that for positive now. When two people spend a lot of time together they know each other well. God wants you to get to know Him, so you can show the others how to get to know Him. He's a friend to the friendless, a mother to the motherless, hope to the hopeless. He'll fill your heart to the rim with joy.

The purpose he has for you will flow to somebody

else. After He lifts you up, you can lift somebody else up. He wants to do new things in your life.

You didn't know I existed until I made my presence known in a deeper way by making good things happen for you. I knew of His existence, but not His presence. God showed up and showed out! I knew it when my mama got off crack. That's how He made his presence known in my life.

I still communicate with Him daily, even though things are going great for me in this prison. That's how I keep my sanity. He will be your light in darkness. Read Micah 7:7-8. Learn it by heart. Say it and think about what you're saying. Also, read 1 Corinthians 15:58. Be steadfast, (meaning persistent), and more able, (meaning firm and dedicated). Stay in the Lord, He has a lot for you. As always this message is for whoever is a believer. God bless you. Keep your faith and your sanity.

To The Girls

Girls are all unique and special. They are the completion of a family. They add laughter to a peaceful life. Girls are delicate and tender at heart. They must be cared for and spoken to with wholesome words. Words are the fuel for their strength. They are a garden of potential that must be carefully attended. Concern and attention is the very fertilization of their future. Quality time and hope is the vibrant light that shines on them to help them grow. Eventually, they grow by the seeds that are sown.

They are strong, patient, and grand in emotion. Wisdom of the wise protects their innocent eyes. Determination and their perseverance is uncovered by those that are aware. Their genuine joy can bring a tear to their loving father's eyes with ease.

Girls are the color of a new generation. They adore their mother's love from deep within. Their elegance makes the difference on a partly cloudy day. Their presence speaks the aroma of who they are. Their expressions are like the words of a writer's pen pouring from the ink of their heart to the paper of their skin. Is that why some of them wear make-up to hide who they are? What's inside says they're all-stars. You are a star young lady, so shine everyday, even when everything is not okay!

DEAUDREY WILLIAMS

The following piece, by DeAudrey Williams, was sent to The Beat Within early last month, and it was very inspiring for us, so, since it's really written to praise you, the writers. We wish her all the best and hope to be printing some of her poetry in The Beat someday soon.

Dear Beat Within

I visit the website every day and read y'all poems. Y'all have a gift to write and none of y'all belong there. Y'all words are not in vain. I was on the wrong path heading towards jail. I turned my life around. I do have to go to court July 5. That will be the last time I'm in a courtroom. Today will be the day I take off the shackles and be set free.

May I please have y'all autographs, because y'all are special to me? Keep ya head up Broken Glass, Nick,

Lil' Zane, Street Priest and everybody else. Y'all have inspired me to do right and keep my head up.

Thanks y'all, please keep writing poems, y'all helping people out there change their lives. Y'all have changed mine. Y'all words are not going unheard.

I write poems too. I'm planning on writing a book. It should get published this year. I'm going to dedicate it to y'all. I'm 16 years old with a dream, a dream that's going to come true because of y'all words to stay strong, get off the street, leave the drugs alone and become somebody.



ALEX THE SILICON KID

This is a rare treat to receive such an innocent story, yet with plenty of meaning and interpretation. With that said we would like to welcome first time writer Alex The Silicon Kid. We do hope this is only the beginning from this wonderful writer who steps up huge with his latest contribution/adventure, "The Misadventures of Davy Thomas," which we feature in its entirety. As far as we are concerned Alex will always have a place in our pages. He writes us from the CTF (Correctional Training Facility) in Soledad CA. We truly can not wait for the next installment, and we are sure are readers feel the same.

Hello

I received your newsletter and my first copy of The Beat Within. Wow! I enjoyed reading every page and I'm re-reading many parts too. I don't know if the genre I write is applicable to your format.

Perhaps you'd prefer to do my submissions in parts. That's fine with me.

I began my incarceration experience at the age of twelve. I'm presently serving a life term under the three strike law. I'm a teacher's aide in a GED classroom at CTF-Central.

The Misadventures of Davy Thomas Episode I: Bambino!

On a brisk, autumn afternoon, Davy Thomas drug an iron rake across his front lawn. The lawn was covered with fallen leaves from two enormous walnut trees at the center of the yard. Davy wasn't making much progress because as he raked, the brown and yellow leaves continued to fall. Although frustrated, Davy was momentarily relieved when he heard a familiar sound.

"Beep....Beep-beep!"

Hey. Burned-ham!"

Davy cringed. It was Spike Valentino, his boss from the flower nursery. Spike nicknamed his entire crew, but Davy hated his. The truck, a battered flatbed conversion, continued rumbling down the graveled street. Davy knew it was his signal to report to work. Dropping his rake, he scurried into the house to get permission from his parents.

The Thomas family was one of only three Black families living in a predominately Italian and Portuguese, River Street neighborhood. River Street was the hub of a friendly orchard farming community. Twelve-year-old Davy was a popular, lanky, yet clumsily curious kid, who often displayed a broad, comely smile, exposing a gap between his large front teeth.

By the time Davy arrived at the nursery, all his companions were assembled on the back of Spike's truck. There was Larry Muscwhite, a short, scrawny, freckled-face kid with curly red hair. His fiery chatter and quick wits earned him command of the crew's respect. Then, there were the brothers Tony and Bobby Lozano, a cocky, lean, and tan, feisty pair. Finally, the youngest of the crew, Richard and Lil' Henry Mora, a pair of "whinning winnies", as they were often called, were short, stocky and pale, and usually quarreled with everyone.

Spike told the boys he needed their help to pick up some floral frames at Oak Hill Cemetery. The boys were anxious to visit Oak Hill because they heard it was the largest and oldest cemetery in the country. Shortly after the journey began, the ram-shackled truck filled with its crew, sped along the highway, and when Spike beeped the truck's horn, the boys yelled the cheer he'd taught them.

"BAM-BINOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Traveling for almost an hour, they finally arrived at Oak Hill. The cemetery lot was a sprawling sixteen acres of gravesites. There were thousands of plots containing plaques, tombstones, and family crypts. The narrow streets were intricately woven among luminous oak and willow trees. Spike parked the truck near a pile of floral flames and instructed the boys to load the equipment carefully. Then, Spike and one of the graveyard caretakers walked over the cemetery's business office. When the boys finished loading the truck, they began an exploration of the cemetery grounds. On a distant hill's slope they spied a peculiar building surrounded by a grove of trees.

"Wow! That's an awfully strange looking building," proclaimed Richard. "I wonder what's in it?"

"It looks like a place where they cook people," explained Bobby.

"Nah dummy, you mean incinerate," said his brother Tony.

"Ya' friggin' bums!" cried Larry. "You're thinking of a crematorium where they cremate dead bodies, but it ain't got no

chimneys, so it must be some other kind of building."

"Aw, Musclemouth, you think you know everything," stated Lil' Henry.

"Tell your kid brother to quit calling me Musclemouth!" shouted Larry.

"If they used lasers, the building wouldn't need chimneys," exclaimed Bobby.

"You and your science fiction junk," declared his brother Tony, "Lasers don't exist."

"Yes they do!"

"No, they don't! Just ask Musclemouth."

"Hey! Shut your faces before we wake up the dead!" hollered Larry.

"Lower your voices, guys. Spike told us to be respectful when we're on these sites," declared Davy. "Somebody might be praying or somethin'."

"Davy, are we gonna investigate that building?" asked Lil' Henry.

"Sure, but let's do it quietly, alright?"

"Yeah, let's do it," they all agreed.

Twenty minutes later, the boys reached a towering wrought iron fence, which surrounded the curious building. The entrance gate was welded shut, so the boys were stymied. They elected to read the wooden sign:

Oakhill Mausoleum
Condemned Area
No Trespassing

"What's a ma-use-o-leum?" asked Lil' Henry.

"Heck if I know," answered his brother Richard. "Muscwhite, got any ideas?"

"Nah, never heard of one 'till now."

"Well, what are we waiting for?" declared Bobby. "Somebody give me a boost."

"Are you crazy?" exclaimed his brother. "Look at all those spikes across the top. One slip, and you'll look like a pig on a stick. There must be another way in."

Several moments later, "Hey, come quick!" shouted Lil' Henry. "I found a hole we can crawl through!"

Twenty feet from the entrance was a thicket of hedges camouflaging a narrow ditch directly under the fence. Squirming their way through, they entered the mausoleum's dark and narrow archway. Once inside, they began creeping their way down a dingy corridor. Kerosene lamps were sparsely scattered along the granite walls. The light projected by the lamps was barely adequate to the aide the boys in their curious search. Protruding from the stone walls were rows of plaques attached to marble rectangular blocks. Dates and names were carved on each plaque.

"Wow! Look at these dates. They go all the way back to the Civil War days," proclaimed Muscwhite. "This one says Bill Elliott, 1806-1865."

This one reads Jeremiah Carson, 1803 -1864," added Davy.

"Hey guys! I found another path!" shouted Richard.

The boys roamed through the maze. Each corridor was identical to the first they encountered. "Hey you guys, don't you think we oughta be getting' back to the truck?" Spike's bound to be looking for us by now," remarked Davy.

"What times it getting' to be?" asked Tony.

"I don't know," said Davy. "I forgot to bring my watch."

"Well, frig it," said Larry. "Let's get outta here. This place

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ALEX THE SILICON KID (CONT.)

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stinks." The boys wandered down one corridor and then another, desperately trying to find their way back to the entrance. Suddenly, Lil' Henry shrieked, "AAAAAHHHH!"

"What?" They all shouted.

"I think I saw somethin'."

"Like what?" inquired Richard.

"Like some kind of animal. I know I saw somethin'. Now it's gone."

"It was probably a shadow you fool."

"Why can't we find our way out? It's getting dark in here."

"Lil' Henry's getting scared," whined Bobby. "Don't worry, we won't let the boogie-man get you."

"Shut up Bobby!" said Richard. "Quit clowning my kid brother."

"Try and make me, fool!"

"Yo' momma already made you, fool!"

"Hey, shut up you turds!" hollered Musclewhite. "Look!"

"WHAT?" They all shouted back.

"The lamps have gone out!" The lamps went out and the entire mausoleum became pitch black...

The sun nestled behind the distant hills, as the trees cast grotesque shadows across the cemetery plots. Nightfall was approaching rapidly, while Spike and several caretakers searched for the boys.

"Well, Spike, we've searched all the family crypts, the creek bed, and all the plots that have been dug for tomorrow's funerals."

"No sign of my boys, eh?"

"No, but there's one place we haven't checked."

"Where's that?"

"The mausoleum." Before heading out to the mausoleum, the head caretaker explained the situation more thoroughly to Spike.

"If the boys found a way inside that tomb, then they're probably having trouble finding a way out. Inside, it's built like Roman catacombs, a mass of tunnels that run erratically throughout the building for almost a quarter of a mile. And there's only one entrance. That's because the building is built into the side of the hill."

"You mean the tunnels go back into the mountain?"

"That's right, and the entrance gate was welded shut about twenty years ago."

"My boys, they's a smart. If they find a way in, they find a way out."

"I hope that you're right, but we'll need to pick up some tools to take down the fence. Get your truck and meet us at the utility shed."

"Holy Toledo!" howled Larry. "Who turned them freakin' lights out?"

"It was the boogie-man," cajoled Bobby.

"Quit your teasing!" hollered Lil' Henry.

"I wasn't talking to you, shrimp."

"Shut your mouth, Bobby!" shouted Richard.

"Shut yours, creep!"

Suddenly, Richard lunged at Bobby, tackling him to the ground. Bobby began kicking in every direction, while the other boys wrestled to restrain them.

"Everybody, be still."

"What?"

"Ssshhh, I heard somethin'. Listen," pleaded Davy.

"I smell something funny," said Tony.

"Yeah, Bobby probably pooped on himself," teased Richard.

"No! You did fool!"

"No, you're the fo—"

"Yaak, yuk, yuk,.....Yaaaak, yuk, yuk-yuk." The eerie cackle came from a haggard figure looming over them, a humpbacked man who spoke in a gravelly voice. His oversized tobacco stained teeth, glistened in the dark. He was covered in filth and smelled like motor oil.

"You young'ins spend so much time fightin' an' jaw jackin', no wonder you ain't found your way out by now. Yaaak, yuk-yuk-yuk-yuk."

"Who are you?" questioned Davy.

"Who, me? Well... I'm the tooth fairy. Yaaak, yuk-yuk-yuk-yuk. And you? You young'ins are a sorry bunch. Ya'll want out of here or not?"

"Heck-yeah! Yelled Musclewhite. "What's your name mister?"

"My name is Jim. Make a line and follow me."

The boys remained silent, while Jim led them through a series of hallways. Finally, Jim stopped and placed his right shoulder against a blank slate of recessed marble, stretching from the earthen floor and ending a foot short of the tunnel's ceiling. The boys awed and ogled while the block of rock revolved, and a blinding stream of light showered their grimy, cringed faces.

Jim hustled everyone inside the lighted room, and muscled the marble slab to its original state. Once their pupils adjusted to the light, the boys were amazed at the amount of junk and garbage the tiny room contained. There were plastic tubs and gallon cans filled with wire, nails, screws, and brackets. Each was stacked on shelves almost reaching the ceiling. Jim had an assortment of bicycle parts, fishing rods, radios, and clocks.

Stationed at the room's center was a makeshift table, a pine door resting on two saw-horses. Adjacent to the table was a toolbox and two portable ice chest. Jim opened one of the chests and pulled out several cans of ice-cold root beer and passed them between the boys. Next, he rolled back a carpet from under the table. The boys gathered around and peered over his shoulder.

"This hole drops down to a ditch. It will lead ya' to the main sewer. The sewer runs underneath the cemetery driveway. Nah, let me warn ya, it stinks awful bad down there, but not much worse than it does up here. All ya' got to do is follow that ditch, and when ya gets inside the sewer pipe, start countin' them manhole covers. When ya get to number five, well, you'll know it's the right one 'cause a street lamp will cast its light right on ya. I want you boys to promise me ya won't tell a soul I got me hideaway, or that I helped ya', but y'all are welcomed to stop by anytime ya in the neighborhood, Yah, yuk-yuk-yuk. Is that a deal?"

The boys thanked Jim while slipping through the narrow hole. Musclewhite was the first to reach the sewer line and fifth manhole cover. He assisted his companions in exiting from the sewer. The boys were exhausted and relieved to find Spike's truck parked only several yards away. They all climbed into the back and pulled down the truck's tarp cover, protecting themselves from the night's chilly air.

Several moments after the boys arrived, Spike entered the truck's cab and cranked the cold engine. Then, Spike heard a mysterious knocking noise. At first, he thought the sound was coming from his truck motor, but when he cut the motor off, the knocking continued. Spike peered through the rear window of his cab. The floral frames were piled high and blocked his vision. Spike climbed down from the cab, walked over to the rear, and peeked under the truck's tarp cover. Looking back at him were six pair of bright owl eyes, and six sets of glowing white teeth. As he stared in complete astonishment, Davy counted.

"One, two, three." And in unison, the boys yelled Spike's infamous words:

"BAM-BI-NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"



ALEX THE SILICON KID (CONT.)

What A Convict Can Tell You About Rehabilitation

I began the incarceration experience at the age of twelve. Five decades later, I find my life shackled with a series of felony convictions, for which I am presently serving a life term. I am left wondering if I've gained anything from prison rehabilitation.

Each time that I returned to confinement, I learned more about the strengths and weaknesses of prison rehabilitation, the built in "shock and awe." The system tries to bludgeon first-termers which is clearly not adequate deterrent. It became evident early on that I had to find a better system of improving myself.

Recidivism is the thorn in the system's side, and my prison journey is a classic example. Rehabilitation for me has been learning to cope with a self-destructive personality derived from childhood. My mother committed suicide when I was three. My father was murdered when I was at the age of ten, and two of my siblings died before I reached age twelve. Losing a family at an early age is not excuse to break the law, but it needs to be factored in when I evaluate why prison has become my revolving door.

In spite of my criminal past, I attained a measure of success. I completed high school, some college courses, and became certified in the electronic drafting field. Although I worked diligently, I found it acceptable, in some working environments, to use drugs in order to keep up. My personality, altered by drugs, began a fusion of the worst kind. Everything I worked so hard to attain, spiraled out of control.

Refusing to give in, I voluntarily committed myself to a variety of drug rehab programs: 30-day clinics, 90-day

clinics, hospital clinics, inpatient and outpatient, coed and non-coed programs. I was seeking an instantaneous cure, one of which took the least amount of effort.

It never happened.

Once, I used a bad batch of drugs, which left me hospitalized for several days. I returned to the streets homeless. I slept in bushes by railroad tracks, ate at the Salvation Army, and worked odd jobs, where I could find them. The lifestyle was crippling my health and mental outlook. I looked and smelled like puke. I weighed 130 pounds. When I boarded a transit system bus, people would give up their seats just to get away from me. I was ashamed to walk the streets in daylight. My remaining family members thought I was crazy. I finally caved in and went back to crime.

My life-term in prison doesn't mean my life has ended; it has only changed. Outside of prison, I lived for good times, but never fully comprehended how I could be an asset to a community in the smallest way, as opposed to a detriment in a big way. My commitment to self-rehabilitation continues. I've discovered that if I concentrate my energy towards helping others, I can better learn how to improve myself and learn to live life on life's terms.

Every incarcerated person has regressed to this station based on character flaws and failures of some degree; my life is just one example. The corrections department needs to start living up to its own entitlement. The word "corrections" should be synonymous with "rehabilitation."

Prison should be a training ground for educational attainment. The mission should be to provide rehabilitation skills and aid human beings in getting on track with realistic goals, and to help them become competitive and productive members of the communities they'll someday return to.



TITO There is something very real, something both sweet and heartbreaking, about this first-time submission to The Beat. And there is also something to be admired about wards of the CYA (California Youth Authority), like young Tito, who write us even knowing they won't have the pleasure of seeing their words (and art) in print, due to a very strange CYA policy forbidding The Beat entry into the lives of the many wards who have been touched by the paper over the years. Tito writes, and hopes, (and draws) from the Chaderjian Juvenile Correctional Facility in Stockton.

Introducing Me

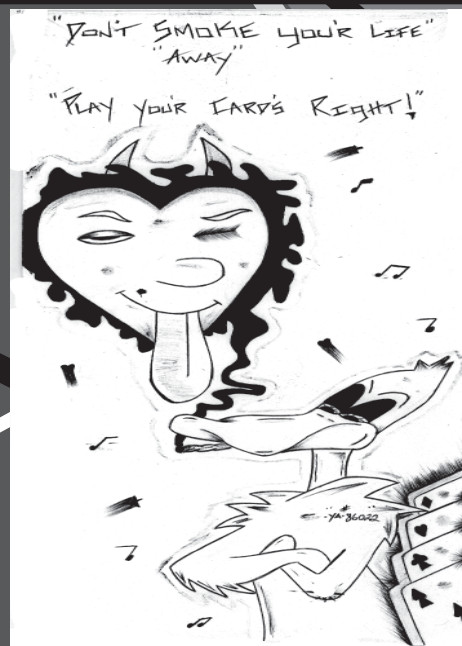
I like playing sports, reading, drawing and hanging out with my friends. But I need new friends, and I want a better life for myself because I been in the system for a long time. Plus I been taking from the world and hurt my real people. I'm ready to give back and help my people.

The world is my people, but some people need help, like myself... Oh, and I got this drawing. It's a message from my life, and how I started to play my cards right.

Never

Never say I love you,
if you really don't care.
Never talk about feelings,
if they aren't really there.
Never hold my hand,
if you're going to break my heart.
Never say you are going to,
if you don't plan to start.
Never look into my eyes,
if all you do is lie.
Never say hello,
if you really mean good-bye.
If you really mean forever,
then say you will try.
Never say forever,
'cause forever makes me cry.

**Never say hello,
if you really
mean good-bye**



ARTHUR LEE HENDERSON

Arthur Lee Henderson, aka Bakri Bilal Abdal Wu'min, sends *The Beat Without* some wise and loving poems from Lancaster State Prison. Anderson wrote these poems for his older sister, Charlotte Henderson, and her friends, "fellow captives," who are in Chino State Prison.

A Letter To My People

Please tell our friends in the struggles, I send my regards. And the one going home soon, she's lucky, and above what the system views her as, she must strive to reclaim her life, the one she may not have ever had. The world needs her out there, more than the government needs her person in it's prison/industrial complex.

Please tell your cell partner, our young sister, to seek to convert her steel cage into a hall of higher learning, because a university isn't where someone else constructs a building dedicated to that purpose. A university is where one chooses to seek and acquire knowledge.

True, prisons are hellish slave camps, but the plantation does not have to be a place to foster ignorance, just as being on a college campus does not, in and of itself, grant or bestow knowledge on a person or it's occupants. One must become dedicated to studying.

A Brother's Love

Stay strong, be sweet,
never forget the beauty of being my big sister,
the African Queen,

for your knowledge and wisdom will carry your body
from the dungeon to the palace.

Strive and fight within your means,
for the door to a palace can only be opened by its rightful
resident. Yours awaits you, my beloved sister.

I hope I live close by.
Smile, I love you, girl!

Walk With Me

The chains of slavery depend on the ignorance of
those enslaved
to remain locked.

The key to freedom depends on the knowledge
of those wanting to be freed!

THE FURNACE OF HOPE

I'm striving to keep the anger
of enslavement from fueling
the fires of ignorance and hatred.

For the anger of enslavement
is better channeled into fuel
for the burning desire I have for knowledge.

I must admit,
I love the glowing radiance which emanates

The Unexplained

There are many different kinds of love.
Each kind of love holds a different set of meanings
as applied to each individual.

May God grant us the glorious day
when you will come to know just what it means
when I hold you in my arms and convey in words
and emotions what it means, only for you, when I
say I love you, sis.

SNEAKY

We're sure by now Delon, the man known as Sneaky, has given up on ever seeing his work published in *The Beat*, yet we hope that after he views his rock solid piece "Starting Time" he will reconsider writing us and that we hear from him down the road. Sneaky gives us a glimpse of who he is and where he is today, with some important wisdom included. Sneaky writes us from "Old Folsom aka Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA

**you gotts to stay sucka-free. Do your own time
and be your own man or woman**

Starting Time

I've been a gangsta for years, and I've shed so many tears, for this life I live. I've been gang bangin for twelve years and I'm only twenty-four. I asked God why did I do this fo? What did I gain? Nothin but thirteen years in Folsom State Prison!!!

And I'm gonna keep it real with you, I was scared when I first came to the system. They sent me to Delano Reception Center. Then they sent me to Delano three yard, the Main Line. It was cool there! Now when I say it was cool, don't get me wrong, you still gotta watch your back. Don't ever think you don't, because always remember you're in prison now and don't think just because you're cool with someone that they won't turn on you, because they will!!! Believe me, I know!! I learned the hard way.

You always gotta look at you surroundings. All I'm saying about Delano is it was a laid back pen.

When I went there, there was some homies from the "hood" and they put me up on game.

As for me, I'm from Pomona California and I was only at Delano for a few months, then they transferred me here, to Folsom State Prison, Old Folsom. I'm telling you, when I road through the front gates, I thought this place was a dungeon, by it being so old. After I got here, there was some homies up here too.

As for the program up here, it's messed up! This is not the spot. The COs trips on any little thing. And the ninjas are always trying to get over on you. There's ninjas that try to test you, too. That's why you gotts to stay sucka-free. Do your own time and be your own man or woman. And remember there's a saying that I live by, keep your friends close and keep your enemies even closer!!! Remember whatever happens, always keep your head up and never give up hope! God bless, I'm out!



FRANK RAMOS THE KID

It's amazing how much wisdom can be accumulated by the age of 21. That's how old Frank Ramos, "The Kid," is. In each of the pieces that follow, there is great insight and self-awareness — and the courage to face himself squarely. The excerpt from his letter explains why he decided to address the problem of child abuse, which he does brilliantly and sadly in the poem, "Touching." Both of the other two poems, "I Want To Be Free," and "I Love My Wifey," also reveal a young man with a passion for truth, even when it hurts. "The Kid" writes his heart out from Donovan State Prison in San Diego.

Touching

Nightmares, twisted visions, unwanted thoughts, wake up feeling rotten...
Trembling, drippin' sweat, silently screaming, mouth feeling like it's full of cotton...
The demon said, "I am your friend, so let's play a game called pretend...
"I'll be the doctor and you, little boy, can be my patient... There you go, all good and well...
"And remember, this is between you and me, so there's no need to go run and tell..."
For every action, there's a reaction. Home dude's lucky I don't let him have it...
Pull out the automatic, click it, wrap him up in plastic, then make him vanish, poof! Just like an act of magic...
La neta , el whey tiene suerte que no está nadando con lost pescados
Pero yo no estoy preocupado porque yo sé que sí va a pagar por suspecados...
(The truth is that he is lucky he isn't swimming with the fishes
But I'm not worried because I know he is really going to pay for his sins...)
You see, there's no reason to stress over a coward
The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind to powder!
My adolescence wasn't very nice...
I was done like ATT — not once, not twice, but thrice!
I was robbed by the wickedest crooks...
I could never get back what was took...
They say people can recover from anything except childhood...
How can I begin to understand something that isn't meant to be understood?
I would if I could, but I can't, so I don't.
I just deal with it and cope the best way I know...
And that ain't much, maybe that's why my life has been all screwed up...
For the longest, I used dope, maybe as a means of escape
But it was a mistake that was costing me my son!
I can no longer hide from what needs to be faced
That's why? I'm here telling the story that needed to be told...
Self-analyzation has me debating whether my past violations have contributed to my current situation. And I might just be grasping at straws,
But I'm tired of living in walls
So I'm doing anything and all to try to find the cause of my downfalls...
And in no way am I trying to play the blame game...
I truly hold myself accountable for the decisions that I've made
You play, you pay...
I'm just trying to figure out if B and C have anything to do with A...
Everybody has problems... Mine?
I'm just trying to solve them
Even if I do, the nightmares and rotten feeling will probably still remain...
Hey, life's a bitch, then you die... Some things just will never change!

Lastly, to all you sick perverted bastards, get help and keep your hands to yourself! You might be touching someone softly, but you are affecting them deeply. And to all you demons who do it over and over, don't even trip! "The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind to powder!" it might take a while, but everyone gets what they got coming.

I would say that more than 1/3 of the people that I know have been molested.

**My
adolescence
wasn't very
nice...
I was done
like ATT
— not once,
not twice,
but thrice!**

Excerpt from a letter

Dear Beat,

My piece, "Touching," I believe is one of my strongest. My sisters suggested that I might be holding something deep inside that I need to talk about, or get out some other way. She feels that whatever it may be, may be the cause for me having my "problems" — drug addiction, self destructive behavior, fear of success, fear of responsibility. And I know in a lot of cases, children who have been touched go on to touch others themselves. I thank God for that not being the case in my instance.

So I wrote about something that might just be the root of my destructive behavior. I'm sure some people are surprised by my bluntness and straight-forwardness. But what I'm hoping to achieve is for people to understand that it's okay to talk about stuff like this.

It's funny 'cause a lot of people I shared this poem with also revealed that they've been "touched" also. I know it's a sad reality, but it's a reality nonetheless. And it happened to more people than we think. I would say that more than 1/3 of the people that I know have been molested. It's sad, yes, but it's something I think people should talk about and deal with instead of just burying it.

Not a minute goes by
without you
on my mind

Not a minute goes by without
me feeling this hurt
deep down inside

FRANK RAMOS THE KID (CONT.)

I Want To Be Free

"What do you want to be when you grow up?"
I remember they asked me that in elementary...
and I don't remember saying anything about being a dope fiend,
in and out of the penitentiary...
What I do remember saying, if my memory serves me right,
is that I just want to be happy and healthy in body, soul and mind...
But we all know things don't always turn out
the way that we would like...
And we all know that no matter how hard you look,
some things are just never easy to find...
And we all know it's just part of this crazy thing
that us people like to call life...
So I can sit here and ask why, and why... and why?
And I can sit here and say, "Okay, maybe if I woulda done this...
Just maybe, and maybe, and if, and if and if..."
But isn't it all just water underneath the bridge
'cause regardless of what I said or wanted,
it is what it is!

(Chorus x2)

And I want to be free — free — free
And I gots to be me — me — me

They try to tell me that my affiliations
are a direct result from my decisions...
Then I must be insane 'cause who in their right mind chooses
prison
Oh yeah, I must be literally crazy
'cause who in their right mind chooses drugs over his family and
newborn baby...
Who in their right mind chooses to be an addict and a failure
Who in their right mind is 26 yet with a 15-year-old behavior
Who in their right mind denies being high to somebody's face
with big ol' dilated pupils
Who in their right mind steals from his own family and lies without
even having a scruple...
That's insanity! There's got to be something wrong with me...
I know I didn't choose to have an addictive personality...
I never wanted to be my own worst enemy...
And I never wanted to grow up to be just like my daddy
But hey, what can I say? I guess that's just my reality
And I'm not Houdini, but sometimes I wish I was...
Then I could make all my problems vanish magically

(Chorus x2)

I've heard often that the first step in recovery is coppin' to the fact
that you're suffering from a disease called addiction...
admitting that you have a problem and wanting to fix it!
And I admit I was twisted...
And I want to continue to get the help I need so I can live in the
way life is supposed to be lived...
So I could be a good husband to my wife, true to myself, and the
best father to my kid...
And, shhh, in no way am I confused...
Nothin' in this world's for free, I'm going to have to pay my dues...
But I got too much to lose and everything to gain,
so I'm going to do what I gots to do, whatever it takes
because this is a war, and the devil's been killin' me...
So I've asked the Lord to bless me with the needed artillery...
And even though today I was sober
I will have to continue to fight, 'cause this war will never be

I Love My Wifey

I love my wifey, she is so nicey
I thank Him daily, the Lord Almighty
It's never easy, it's always hard
to express these feelings
that dwell deep inside my heart
God, I miss you so much, it's rough
not being there every day when you wake up
It's tough not being there every night
holdin' you tight
whispering soft nothin's
while our pride sleeps peacefully by our side...
Not a minute goes by without you on my mind
Not a minute goes by without me feeling this hurt
deep down inside
You're like the sun, caring,
that shines bright high in the sky
because without you caring,
this life just wouldn't be right...
Our marriage has had many twists and turns
I haven't always given you what you needed,
I've been such a jerk
Yet you still love me no matter what the season...
And if there's one thing I've learned,
if you have a treasure you better keep it
I will be the man you deserve, and that's a promise,
so you better believe it
I know my track record sucks,
and you've had about enough
Yet, on me you still haven't given up
And I know that's 'cause my soul you have touched
You know the real me, you know my capabilities
And you know I'm going to turn
all your dreams into reality
I have to let you know what you mean to me
I have to let you know, Kari, to me you are everything,
the things dreams are made of, more precious, rarer
than a diamond in the rough
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
I will always love you no matter what
You are the zig to my zag, the Swisher to my Sweet
You are the star in my flag,
the wind beneath my wings...
You are my second half... you make me complete
I love your loyalty, your devotion,
and your snoop style
I love your passion, your dedication,
and your big, beautiful, lovely smile
And it's also the little things you do —
like watching me sleep
that have me so madly in love with you
You know it really breaks my heart
that we have to be apart
But in no way does it mean we're not together,
because you're always in my heart
Thank you for believing in me, for loving me
unconditionally
Thank you for having faith in me
I love you, Mami, you mean the world to me

I never wanted to be
my own worst enemy

I AM SOMEONE

Out of respect for "I Am Someone" we hold his name back from the pages of The Beat. The following piece and excerpt from a letter truly saddens us to hear what our old friend is presently enduring. It has been some time since we last heard from him, but we're sure in due time he'll give us the low down on how his case is unfolding. For your information "I Am Someone" knows the life of incarceration too well. He started his incarceration life in SF/YGC, went to CYA until he was 25 years old, came out of CYA to a job with The Beat Within where for several years he stepped up huge as an editor, and facilitator, while touching lives in many juvenile halls in the Bay Area. It's been a minute since we last heard from our dear friend. Well, today, he writes us from county jail, where he is truly fighting for his freedom/life.

Someone Must Know

How are you feeling today?
I'm really not quite sure
So instead I'll try and explain why...
I'm looking at 70 plus years to life
As I could be called out on strikes
Not out of a baseball game
But out of life
Something I have only yet begun to taste
Like an appetizer prematurely taken back
And mistaken as my main course
There's a feeling of complete emptiness
This thing of mines they call life
Up to this point has been unfulfilled
It's been four and a half mouths into this new
But old, despised, hated way of having to live
Maybe that's why there's been no family visit
My God is a loving God however
He heard my cries and felt my pain
A silent prayer of mine was answered
I had been blessed with a golden opportunity
A pass was granted from up above
I was able to see, touch, hold, hug, laugh, cry
And spend quality time with my family
That was the first day of this New Year
This year of Reconciliation and Recovery
For now I'm on my way
To visit my father in the hospital
For my father had a stroke and was in a coma
The visit only lasted three hours
That's because the pass was for four hours
20-25 minutes each way to Frisco
Not a minute to spare or was wasted
My sister must have heard my cries to God
It was the night before my pass

When I couldn't get through on the phone
She arranged to bring my son to the hospital
Without my knowledge or a slight hint from me
A second silent prayer was answered
Although like Cinderella my time was running out
To her it was a fairy tale come true
For me this was my life, my reality
Except I was a visitor passing by
My other reality awaited me
In my honest words it's more like a nightmare
But this one nightmare has endless chapters
Where I'm awakened and startled most times
To new and old lessons about life
Back to jail I voluntarily came
It's been a month and a half since
Still no family visit
My visit is to replay that miraculous day
When for a brief moment, minute in time
Everything was picture perfect
Considering the circumstances
My father is slowly recovering
Thanks be to God
And as for myself
I'm still digesting the news I received
After I came back from my pass
Of how much total time I'm looking at
And that my pitch count is full with 2 outs
So once again I'm being asked
At times this question seems like a rhetorical one
How am I feeling today?
Perhaps with what I've explained
You'll see why I'm not quite sure
Then maybe you'll know
Because I honestly don't know
Someone must know
Only God really knows...

**this one
nightmare has
endless chapters
Where I'm
awakened and
startled
most times
To new and old
lessons about life**

Who Am I (An Excerpt From A Letter)

Who am I to speak considering what I've put myself in?
Yeah, so I find it very hard right now
to attempt to have a normal day,
a normal day to me in one packed with lots of (still) raw emotions and
deep resentments.
Everything and I do mean everything triggers a thought, a feeling, that
sends me on a daily emotional roller coaster.
I find it next to impossible to sit in front of the T-V.
Certain magazine, books I will not pick up
because I know there'll be a cause and effect.
Certain parts of the newspaper I can't even look at
for the emotion that's sure to come.
I won't even talk to certain people
because I do not want the conversation to go down a street/topic
that will bring up emotions.
It's a trip, but it's like I have to place myself in a personal jail
while I'm in jail
to avoid having to catch major feelings.
How long can I do this for, though?

JE-NO

Taking his love for The Beat east, Je-no drops a handful of flows on us from Glen Mills in Pennsylvania. Once a stellar contributor from the max unit in Santa Clara, Je-no continues to up the level of his game, taking Tupac as his model and writing rhymes filled with pathos, contradictions, and doses of clarity. We hope Je-no finds himself in his quest to ascend to the throne instead of finding the same destiny that awaited his hero (and that Je-no himself seems to prophesize in his flows). We look forward to hearing more from Je-no soon.

**This is to the mothers out there who strugglin' to feed they seed
stay strong, and to the future mothers take heed**

Livin' This Life

(I know y'all know who this is — ya boy who spit the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but the truth. To those that heard, they call me Je-no.)

(Hook 2x)

Livin' in this life of hate and lust
not too many more homies we can trust
Too many enemies out here
but they all bound to get crushed.

I swear I done seen so many people die
evil eyes
that's what you see when Je-no ride
ain't no disguise
a lot of younguns die by homicide
My enemies look at me like they ready fo' war
but they killed my brother Freddy
What for?

We'll never know
murder scenes on every show
it's another episode
Catastrophic
it's genocide in America
my brothers is dyin'
all mothers cryin' keep yo' head up
My homie in jail
my sister in college
befo' I make my journey to hell
let me spit some of this knowledge
Feel me?

It ain't the point you wanna kill me
it's the point we was homies
now you tryin' to put the steel to me
But I ain't scared, I'm prepared fo' more
if I die a casualty in this war
let rain pour
on my corpse
and put my name on a stone
and leave me be and let me die alone
'cause I was livin' this life.

(Hook 2x)

Look at me
then take a look at yo'self
The Beat King, I'm still holdin' the belt
I hate to say it
a lot of dudes rap but most of these tracks be basic
I ain't gon' say no names
fo' sho' you know who you is
My mom cried and I told her
put yo' head on my chest and feel the heartbeat of a
soldier
I'm in the courtroom, eyes closed, head down
they testifyin' because another man dead now
but the charges was dropped
so I'm back in the zone
bodies drop at the clap of the chrome
Lord please
save the Gs
befo' we all go
but when I die I'll be on top of the globe
holla at me rogue
Stay focused 'til I leave and beat 'em down like Rocky
because I'm climbin' to the top and only death is gon'
stop me.
Holla.

(Hook 2x)

Listen

Tell me why

my enemies wanna see me die
contemplatin' my death, that's how I feel inside
who knows how hard it is to hide?
stuck in a cell facin' the L because you chose to ride
Now the judge got you stressin' because you'll neva see the stars
again
it's just a cold-ass cycle that moves, it always starts again
look inside of the hearts of men
We all play a part
in this cold world
life's mo' precious than a pearl
didn't notice what I had until I had a baby girl
dark skinned wit' curls
Break into cold sweats in the nighttime
they all scream peace
they must be outta they right mind
cops pretend that they fight crime
you can only take over darkness when the light shines
This is to the mothers out there who strugglin' to feed they seed
stay strong, and to the future mothers take heed

this all yo' need:

Lifetime independence
don't put yo' life in a man's hands
always depend on yo'self and do the best you can
And to my black males
hustlin'
makin' crack sales
strugglin'

try to set an example, don't lead ya future into troublesome
just pay attention
and hear the stuff that I'm mentioning
don't give up ya life ova a Benjamin
Man, I wish the world would just listen

(chorus 2x)

Live by the sword, die by the sword
at night fall on my knees and just cry to the Lord
if God put me on this earth to ride in this war
I'ma ride then 'cause that's what He brought me out here for
Listen to me...

I get one life

so I try to live it to the fullest
but how could I do that when I'm stuck dodgin' bullets
But don't nobody got the answer fo' that
I'm so sick you might as well call me the cancer of rap
bring it back
to when I was stuck in a cell
I hope I go to heaven for goin' through hell
My enemies, they want my head on a platter
but I'm already dead, it don't matter
Got my momma at church screamin', "My son is a dead man"
when I die that's only God's plan
Broken glass shattered from gunshots that rang out
police smother the 'hood because they don't know the direction
they came out
they came out of Satan's mouth
got children in the street dyin'
because God kicked 'em out
I'm afraid to sleep
so when they put me in my grave don't weep
just remember that I died in the game deep
Don't blame me
because the money neva changed me
because when I get out of this hole it'll be the same streets

(chorus 2x)

JE-NO (CONT.)

*The "United States
of America"*

I don't know why as the "United States of America" we have the most ignorant people trying to run our country. See this right here? This is what we need to take care of. Not Iraq, not South Korea, not Afghanistan — the 'hood is what we need to try to help.

You can find Saddam Hussein thousands of thousands of miles away, but you can't find the murderers of our people's leaders. Martin Luther King Jr., Tupac Shakur, Cesar Chavez, Malcolm X... the list goes on.

Help us out. Get some programs to help our future. Try to make a difference in our country first before you try to disinfect someone else's country. I wish I could write the President because he definitely would know my opinion. It wouldn't matter anyway.

And to those in the 'hood, hustle for a purpose, not just fa street fame. Until next time I guess. I'm gone.

Visions of A Dead Man

I could have made it
damn, I can't take it
seein' my body laid down bloody and naked
where bullet shells penetrated
I would have seen 'em comin' if I wasn't heavily faded
They pulled up in a truck
all I could do was duck
Took these slugs to the chest
knew I should have wore a vest
momma, she cryin' 'cause her son got put to rest
Life flashed between my eyes when them slugs went
inside my body
momma broke down when she had to identify my body
But we goin' too far, let's get back to the crime scene
we was in a new Mercedes — fresh paint, it was lime
green
they pulled up and screamed
"Long live the king!"
Bust the shots and I fell out
my other homies bailed out
Next thing I know I got the medics over me
pumpin' my chest wit' electricity
How could it be?
Lifetime misery
seen a flat line on the screen
It's all over now
the world tried to hold me down
nobody even cared when I died it was spread all ova
town
I'm at the funeral watchin' my family grieve
my brother holdin' my momma tellin' her to just breathe
they didn't want me to leave
But it was destin'
my momma screamin why — ain't no need to ask that
question
It's the visions of a dead man.

They say the good die young — I wish I could believe it.
They say the good die young and only the strong survive
— that it self kinda contradicts each other. I don't really
understand those two analogies; somebody put me on.
It's the visions of a dead man. RIP Je-no. We miss you.
Long live the king.

So many enemies wish I was dead
put a contract on my head
but I'm still breathin'
I'm leavin' the game on top
so I will neva stop
It's the visions of a dead man

The Streets Is Watchin'

The streets is watchin'
if I am to eva be forgotten
heart's become rotten
enemies keep plottin'
I can't knock 'em
because that's not my style
but when the block go wild
I have no spot to raise my child
I been speakin' to the demons in my sleep
so we come to an agreement
but it's top secret
Blood stains on the cement
when I was lost in the game you should have seen it
wit' the thang tucked in my t-shirt
I used to stand tall on the blade until my knees hurt
Bloody knuckles from tusslin'
rumblin' in the jungle like this was Ali and Foreman
at that time goin' to school wasn't important
I was broke but I had to cop the new Jordans
Well money is time so I couldn't help Mike
couldn't buy his shoes because I needed me a bike
so I can stay on the move instead takin' a hike
Everyone makes mistakes in they life
I made a couple
more money more problems is just part of the hustle
My momma cried and told me
that she didn't even know me
pops couldn't control me
he was too busy bein' an OG
even though my soul slowly
is becomin' greedy and hungry
momma love me
even though the streets is gettin' ugly
she would hug me
and told me no matter where I go the streets would keep his eyes above
me

(chorus 2x)

Keep ya eyes on me Lord
neva cried, just walked around wit' red eyes when the rain poured
Should I explain more?
Tried to change but only became raw
hatin' the way I was raised
lovin' the fact that I was born
Forever I mourn

Oh politicians love to see the black man down
2Pac is the greatest rapper hands down
but I got plans now
I made a decision to put the grams down
No more sellin'
listen to what a poor boy's tellin' you
I'm hotter than battery acid and my lyrics is finally meltin' through you
and now it's gettin' to you —
if it wasn't I wouldn't be spittin' to you
How many people get visits from a music guru?
Ya'll don't listen, do you?
I been rappin' since I was six
but didn't know it was gonna end up like this
look for the next hottest things and see my name on the list
this is the thanks I get...
I been spittin' in The Beat fo' six
that's 180 days
to express my crazy ways
all them days alone
when I was lost up in a maze
neva made a friend
because they couldn't climb up to the stage
couldn't step up to the plate
So I let them be thyself
probation officers is shady, I don't need they help
I feed myself

(Chorus 2x)

Rest in peace Fred-G, T-Terry, Face. I'm tryin' to climb up there fo'
y'all, just a matter of time. Holla.

JE-NO (CONT.)

Is Jail Scary?

(talking)

Rest in peace 2Pac
the only rapper on top
uh, feel me
and God sent me to spit heat to The Beat
follow me
don't compare my best wit' 'Pac's best

(chorus 2x)

Stop frontin' please
the streets is hot like 1000 degrees
oh, don't shed a tear now
if you gonna ride, then ride
la la la la la la la

You ain't dumb enough to push me
my lyrics man is not a toy, they hot enough to cook meat
Picture paragraphs unloaded
heat is steady being toted
think they hard but ain't smart enough to stay focused
Bow down to the Lord hopin' that he pay attention
seein' the devil's comin' for me is somethin' I forgot to
mention
so sit down and listen
Bless me please, Father, I'm a ghost
in these killin' fields
Is jail scary?
I'd rather die befo' I was cursed to know
Let's go deep inside the thoughts of a madman who
screams in the dark
grief hurts
enemies, come get me
these fakas wanna hate
give me a break
what I'm gainin'
from this little beef that you is makin'
erased it out my brain
Momma told me I betta stop befo' I end up stuck
sit in this cell and let my mind adjust

Is jail scary?

(chorus 2x)

Like 'Pac said, "Penitentiaries is packed wit' promise
makers"
how true is that
they just run they mouth but they be fakers
Institutionalized
I live my life survivin' in this jungle
but focused to flash a smile
I'm a rida, I don't mumble
stop stallin'
stuntin' fo' no reason, thinkin' that you ballin'
but you closer to poor
tryin' to see another man fallin'
face first on the floor
Tell 'em what you wanna tell
I ain't scared
I'm about to lose my head soon
so be prepared
That new 'Lac you bought, I'm cruisin' in it
What can I do?
Gotta get this papa because I refuse to lose
gotta stay true
in dis lifestyle that I'm livin'
dodgin' slugs
I rather die befo' I go to prison
die a thug
To my loved ones up in max facin' some years
bob yo' head when you hear this
and feel this
when you turn out the lights
I be there in the dark
even though it's cold in my heart
Is jail scary?

(chorus 4x)

(The greatest: 2Pac; The best rappers alive: Jay-Z,
Yukmouth; The next don: Je-no)

YOUNG D

Young D was formerly incarcerated in the depths of lockdown in SF/YGC. Since then, he has found a place in our office and has been doing excellent work. In the following piece, he talks about being in the system and the frustration that comes with giving the system the power to watch over you. Yet, our colleague Young D has made the decision to get off probation and stay out of the system.

Being Locked Up

Being locked up ain't cool and the reason I say that is because I been there and done that. I experienced it at a young age and I also learned from my mistakes. And going to juvenile has really had an affect on me.

See, before I went to Juvi I was out on the block smoking, drinking, stealing cars and all that bad shhhh. So every night I go to bed I pray and I think to myself and I say this happened for a reason. I'm happy that this happened but then I'm not. See if this wouldn't have happened I wouldn't have the job I got now and I wouldn't be doin' what I'm supposed to be doin'. I'm not happy 'cause this probation and this punk ass trial got me messed up mainly this probation. I can't do what I want without his punk ass knowing. It feel like I'm still incarcerated. I got some lady calling my house every night checking on me, asking me hella questions and shhhh, personal questions at that. I really don't feel how my probation officer be actin', like he want me to do wrong. He see a young man doin' what he got to do and it seems like all he want to do is bring me down, but it's cool as long as I keep my head up — can't nobody bring me down, feel me?

But for the meantime stay up and don't let no punk rock probation officer or nobody bring you down. One.

I'm happy
that this
happened
but then
I'm not.

*I've heard often that the first step in recovery
is coppin' to the fact that you're suffering
from a disease called addiction...
admittin' that you have a problem
and wantin' to fix it!
And I admit I was twisted...*

check out the rest of Frank Ramos The Kid's BWO piece on page 63